# al-Mīzān

*An Exegesis of the Qur'an*

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: S. Ahmad Nizamudin

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***In the Name of Allah,***
***the Beneficent, the Merciful.***

*All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;*
*the Beneficent, the Merciful;*
*the Master of the Day of Judgment;*
*Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech*
*for help;*
*Guide us in the straight path;*
*The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed*
*favors,not of those against whom Thou art*
*wrathful, nor of those who are astray.*

*O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of*
*Your messengers and the last of*
*Your prophets,*
*Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.*
*Also send Your blessings to all Your*
*prophets and envoys.*

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## Arabic Transliteration Key

| Arabic Letters | Transliteration | Arabic Letters | Transliteration |
|---|---|---|---|
| ا | ā | ع | ʿ |
| ب | b | غ | gh |
| ت | t | ف | f |
| ث | th | ق | q |
| ج | j | ك | k |
| ح | ḥ | ل | l |
| خ | kh | م | m |
| د | d | ن | n |
| ذ | dh | ه | h |
| ر | r | و | w/ū |
| ز | z | ى | y/ī |
| س | s | ء | ʾ |
| ش | sh | ة | ah |
| ص | ṣ | ـَ | a |
| ض | ḍ | ـِ | i |
| ط | ṭ | ـُ | u |
| ظ | ẓ | | |

## Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ādam | Adam | Mūsā | Moses |
| Dāwūd | David | Sulaymān | Solomon |
| Hārūn | Aaron | Shuʿayb | Jethro |
| Ibrāhīm | Abraham | Yaʿqūb | Jacob |
| ʿĪsā | Jesus | ʾAyyūb | Job |
| Isḥāq | Isaac | Yūnus | Jonah |
| Ismāʿīl | Ishmael | Yūsuf | Joseph |
| Jibrāʾīl | Gabriel | Zakariyyā | Zachariah |
| Lūt | Lot | ʿUzayr | Ezra |
| | | | |

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

## Foreword

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's exposition of Chapters 14 & 15 of the Qur'an stands as a testament to his profound insight, unwavering dedication, and intricate understanding of Islamic theology. As with his treatment of other chapters, his exegesis of Sūrah Ibrāhīm and Sūrah Al-Ḥijr delves deep into the layers of meanings, drawing out nuances that are often overlooked or misinterpreted.

Chapter 14, named after the Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham), is a chapter replete with themes of guidance, the struggle of prophets against the darkness of disbelief, and the timeless message of monotheism. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, with his characteristic depth, unravels the profound symbolism, historical context, and spiritual insights contained within each verse. He masterfully bridges the gap between ancient narratives and contemporary understanding, making the lessons of the chapter relevant for the modern reader.

While Chapter 15 offers a blend of historical narratives, lessons from past communities, affirmations of monotheism, and consolations to the Prophet. It serves as a reminder of the power and wisdom of God, the importance of heeding divine guidance, and the inevitable reality of the afterlife.

What sets ʿAllāmah's exegesis apart is his ability to weave together different Qur'anic themes into a coherent tapestry of understanding. His commentary does not merely elucidate the meaning of each verse in isolation; rather, it provides a holistic understanding of the chapter in the larger context of the Qur'an's message.

For readers venturing into these Sūrahs with ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī as their guide, the journey promises to be transformative. In an era where superficial interpretations are rampant, this volume stands as a beacon of profound scholarship and spiritual insight, serving as an invaluable resource for those yearning for deeper understanding of the Qur'an's eternal wisdom.

Chapter 14 of the Qur'an, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (Abraham), encompasses several pivotal themes:

**Monotheism (*Tawḥīd*):** Central to the chapter is the concept of *Tawḥīd*, the oneness of God. The chapter repeatedly emphasizes the need to recognize and worship only one God, drawing on the teachings of Prophet Abraham, who was a stalwart advocate of monotheism.

**Prophetic Missions:** The chapter sheds light on the struggles and challenges faced by various prophets, including Moses, Aaron, and Abraham. Their unwavering commitment to their divine missions, despite facing enormous adversities, underscores the chapter's emphasis on steadfastness in faith.

**Divine Guidance:** Throughout the chapter, there's a recurring theme of God's guidance being a beacon of light for humanity. Those who adhere to this guidance are promised bountiful rewards in the hereafter, while those who turn away face dire consequences.

**Gratitude and Ingratitude:** Sūrah Ibrāhīm touches upon the notions of gratitude (*shukr*) and ingratitude (*kufr*). Through various analogies, such as the "good tree" and the "evil tree," the chapter contrasts the outcomes for those who are grateful to God and His guidance versus those who are ungrateful.

**Resurrection and the Afterlife:** The chapter contains vivid descriptions of the Day of Judgment, where deeds are weighed, and individuals either face eternal paradise or hell based on their actions and beliefs in the worldly life.

**Signs of God in Nature:** The Sūrah draws attention to the numerous signs of God present in the natural world, urging individuals to reflect upon creation—from the heavens and earth to the crops that sustain life—as indicators of a single, omnipotent Creator.

**The Power of Prayer:** Prophet Abraham's prayers are highlighted, particularly his plea for a righteous progeny and for the city of Mecca to be a place of peace and monotheism. These supplications underscore the importance and efficacy of prayer in seeking God's mercy and blessings.

In essence, Sūrah Ibrāhīm provides a profound reflection on faith, guidance, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. Through its verses, readers are reminded of the importance of monotheism, the challenges faced by prophets, and the ultimate reality of the afterlife.

Chapter 15 of the Qur'an, Sūrah Al-Ḥijr, encapsulates various central themes:

**Divine Revelation:** The chapter opens with the affirmation of the Qur'an as a book sent down by God. It emphasizes the inimitability of the Qur'an and challenges disbelievers to produce a scripture like it if they doubt its divine origin.

**Stories of Previous Prophets:** Sūrah Al-Ḥijr recounts the tales of several prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Lot, and the people of Thamūd. These stories serve as lessons about the consequences faced by those who rejected the message of God's messengers.

**Creation of Adam:** The chapter provides a detailed account of the creation of Adam and the refusal of Iblīs (Satan) to bow down to him. This act of defiance led to the expulsion of Iblīs from God's mercy, setting the stage for the struggle between good and evil.

**Destruction of Wrongdoers:** The narratives of the people of Lot and Thamūd underline the theme of divine retribution. Both these communities faced divine wrath due to their persistent disbelief and immoral behaviors.

**Divine Protection of the Qur'an:** God assures the Prophet Muhammad that the Qur'an is under divine protection and that no force can alter or corrupt its message. (The author presents a lengthy discourse on this.)

**Consolation to the Prophet:** Throughout the chapter, there are verses meant to console the Prophet Muhammad, reassuring him against the mockery and opposition from the disbelievers of Mecca.

**The Natural World as Signs:** Similar to many other chapters, Sūrah Al-Ḥijr directs attention to the natural world, urging reflection upon the mountains, the earth, and the heavens as signs of God's might and wisdom.

**Resurrection and the Afterlife:** The chapter touches upon the reality of life after death, emphasizing that the resurrection is a certainty and that every individual will be accountable for their deeds.

Verse 15:21 is regarded as one of the gems of the Qur'an. It conveys the profound concept that everything in existence has its designated treasuries (*khazā'in*) with God. These treasures are released to the world in precise measures, reflecting God's meticulous control over creation. This verse encapsulates the idea of God's overarching knowledge, power, and the harmonious order governing the universe.

While the translator, Sayyed Ahmad Nizamudin provided a faithful translation of the original Arabic text, my role and humble contribution

was to enhance the flow, make necessary edits, and ensure clarity and coherence for the target audience. The revisions aimed to maintain the essence and integrity of the original work while ensuring a smooth reading experience.

I'd like to acknowledge the foundational work of Sayyed Ahmad, without which this edition wouldn't have been possible. My goal in editing was to preserve the original's spirit while enhancing its accessibility to contemporary readers.

While in the process of editing these two chapters, I experienced the loss of my father-in-law, and at a different time before, my dear mother and father, who departed from this world. In their cherished memory and as a tribute to their enduring love and guidance, I have chosen to dedicate my efforts and contributions for the benefit of their souls. May God, the Most Merciful, shower His boundless compassion upon their departed souls and grant them a place in His divine mercy. I kindly request that you recite *al-Fatiha* in their remembrance.

Ali Khalfan (Editor)
Tawheed Institute Australia
December 2023
Sydney, Australia

# Chapter 14

## Sūrah Ibrāhīm (Abraham)

almizan.org

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate*

### Verses 1 to 5

#### Introduction to the Sūrah:

The distinguished Sūrah characterizes the Qur'ān, revealed to the Prophet, as emblematic of his divine mission. Through it, he brings people out from the darkness and into the light, guiding them to the path of God, who is Mighty and Praiseworthy. That is to say, He is Overpowering and not overpowered, Self-Sufficient and not dependent upon mankind. He is Kind in His Acts, and is the Bestower of blessings upon them. Given that the Bestower is: (1) Overpowering, (2) Self-Sufficient, and (3) Graceful in His Acts, it is incumbent upon those who receive His blessings to respond to His call, so that they can reap the benefits of the blessings He showers upon them. They should also fear His displeasure and the severity of His torment, since He is Powerful and does not depend on anyone. He is not in need of them and can replace them, as He has with past nations who were ungrateful and oblivious to His blessings. The signs of the heavens and the earth testify that: (1) all blessings belong to Him, (2) He is the Lord of All-Might, (3) He is the possessor of All-Praise, and (4) there is no Lord besides Him. The chapter concludes with the proclamation: "*This is a proclamation for mankind, so that they may be warned thereby and know that He is indeed the One God, and those who possess intellect may take admonition.*"

The views we've presented align with those who argue that this chapter begins by elucidating the objective of messengership and the Book, alluding to the verse: "*that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light, by the command of their Lord*."

The Sūrah is Meccan, as indicated by the context of its verses. It is

attributed to Ibn Abbās, al-Ḥasan, and Qatādah that the Sūrah is Meccan, except for two verses that were revealed concerning the polytheist casualties at the Battle of Badr: "*Have you not regarded those who have exchanged Allah's blessing for ingratitude, and landed their people in the abode of ruin –hell, which they shall enter, and it is an evil abode!*" (14:28-29)

A subsequent discussion will explore these two verses, which aren't overtly indicative of this particular context.

**Commentary:**

الر كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿١﴾

(14:1) *Alif, Lam, Ra*. (This is) a Book We have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable.

Essentially, the verse conveys, "We have revealed this Book to you." The context suggests this as the underlying subject of the predicate. There exist other grammatical interpretations regarding this as well.

God further elaborates: "*that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light*." Contextually, it's evident that this refers to humanity at large, not solely the Prophet's community or the believers among them. The language does not hint at any such limitation. The verses are clear about the universality of the message. For instance, He says: "*that he may be a warner to all the nations*" (al-Furqān:1). Another verse says: "*that I may warn thereby you and whomever it may reach*" (al-Anʿām:19). And also: "*Say, 'O mankind! I am the Apostle of Allah to you all'*" (al-A'rāf:158).

Support for this understanding also comes from explicit Qur'anic verses that address the Jews and the People of the Book at large. The Prophet's endeavors in reaching out to them and the subsequent acceptance of faith by some, like ʿAbdullāh b. Salām, Salmān, Bilāl, Ṣuhayb, and others, further validate this view.

However, the end of the sūrah, which says: "*This is a proclamation for mankind, that they may be warned thereby*," when juxtaposed with its beginning, supports that the term "mankind" here broadly refers to the

believers who have truly transitioned from darkness to light.

The act of bringing people from darkness to light is attributed to the Prophet as he is one of the manifest means for this. Yet, the believer's faith is ultimately directed to God, either directly or through some mediation. This doesn't contradict God's saying: "*Indeed, you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills*" (al-Qaṣaṣ:56). This verse only negates the Prophet's primary role in guidance without nullifying his role entirely, especially when done as an intermediary and with God's permission. Supporting this is God's saying: "*And indeed, you guide to a straight path*" (al-Shūrā:52). This is why God qualified His saying "so that you may bring out" with "by the command of their Lord."

The terms "darkness" (*al-ẓulumāt*) and "light" (*al-nūr*), as well as "misguidance" (*al-ḍalāl*) and "guidance" (*al-hudā*), have been recurrent in the divine discourse. In God's words, guidance is often likened to light while misguidance is equated with darkness. The term "darkness" is used in its plural form, distinguishing it from "light." This is because guidance stems from the truth, and truth is singular, consistent throughout its elements and manifestations. In contrast, misguidance arises from following one's desires, and these desires are varied, differing from one another without unity or consistency in their aspects and truths. God has said, "*This indeed, is my straight path, so follow it, and do not follow* (*other*) *ways, for they will separate you from His way:*" (al-Anʿām:153).

The "*lam*" in His saying, "to bring mankind out," (*li-tukhrij al-nās*) represents a purposeful "*lam*," emphasizing the generality of people as is apparent in the verse. It's not a "*lam*" of consequence because, if it were, all people would be believers, which we know to be contrary.

As for the point some have raised, arguing that divine upbringing, which guides people from darkness to light and leads them to happiness and perfection, is conditional upon preparation and readiness despite the grace being universal, then the feasible extent of this outcome, given its generality, is this very measure.[1]

1 Editor's note: In simpler terms, for individuals to be uplifted from ignorance (darkness) to enlightenment (light) and attain true happiness and perfection through this divine guidance, they must exhibit a certain degree of readiness or receptiveness. Hence, the universal nature of this grace doesn't guarantee universal enlightenment; the actual extent of its effect is contingent on

In it, there's an acknowledgment that having the "*lam*" for consequence contradicts the apparent meaning of the verse. For what's mentioned can only be realized by specifying "mankind" to those who are predisposed. However, what must be understood is that this purpose is legislative, implying that every ruling has an intended objective, which is the benefit that follows it. Indeed, God, the Exalted, calls people to forgive them and guide them to faith and good deeds, to bless them with happiness, and admit them to Paradise. He sends messengers and reveals scriptures to guide people from darkness to light by their Lord's permission. Through His commands and prohibitions, He intends to purify them and rid them of Satan's harm. There are many verses indicating this, and there's no need to list them all, as well as numerous traditions, possibly numbering in the thousands.

Certainly, God proclaimed: "*We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason*" (al-Zukhrūf:3). Further, in the subsequent verse, He declared: "*We did not send any apostle except in the language of his people, so that he might make* (*Our messages*) *clear to them*" (14:4). Then God leads astray whomever He wishes, and He guides whomsoever He wishes. This elucidates that our comprehension of His Book, coupled with the revelations from His messengers, serves as irrefutable divine evidence, leaving no room for dissent. When He articulates, as in the phrase: "He calls you to forgive you a part of your sins," our understanding is that the act of forgiveness is the essence of His summons. This comprehension parallels our interpretation of a leader's directive to his followers, exemplified in commands like: "bring me water, so that I can drink it," "fetch me food, so that I can eat it," or "dress this individual, so his modesty is preserved." In these instances, the acts of drinking, eating, and preserving modesty are the intrinsic purposes behind the commands. God's decrees and regulations possess diverse objectives, all underpinned by a divine intention and wisdom.

Indeed, He has clarified that His dominion is elevated above any sense of need or want, entirely free from flaws or shortcomings. He mentioned: "*Indeed Allah has no need of the creatures*" (al-ʿAnkabūt:6). He also revealed: "*Your Lord is the all-sufficient, the dispenser of Mercy*" (al-Anʿām:133).

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individual preparation.

Additionally, in the Qur'an, it is stated: "*O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable*" (al-Fāṭir:15). From these verses, it is clear that He is independent and doesn't benefit from worldly objectives. His actions are intentional and not without purpose. Why would they be? He describes Himself as Wise, and someone endowed with wisdom doesn't act without reason or randomly. He distinctly rejects any sense of purposelessness in His actions, saying: "*Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly*" (al-Mu'minūn:115). Command and prohibition serve as the means to achieve perfection in the human condition, culminating in the ultimate realization and completion of creation.

In His Creation and Commands, God has purposes. Yet, He doesn't seek perfection through these purposes behind His actions, unlike how we strive for perfection through the intentions behind our deeds. His decisions remain uninfluenced by these purposes. To put it another way, neither judgments nor benefits sway Him, whereas the perceived benefits of an action can drive us towards executing that action, often favoring it over its abandonment. Indeed, He is the Dominant one who cannot be dominated, and the Prevailing one who cannot be prevailed upon. He possesses all, yet nothing possesses Him. He decrees over everything, yet nothing can decree over Him. He shares His Sovereignty with none and is devoid of any weakness, hence requiring no guardian out of vulnerability. God is not governed by rationality; instead, He is the one who guides reason to its understanding. Neither a perceived benefit nor a detriment compels Him to act or refrain; rather, He is the guide to the outcomes dictated by benefit and harm.

The concepts of "purpose" and "benefit" are derived when considering the Divine Action, suggesting that His actions are grounded in some inherent benefit. However, no such benefit dictates His Essence or compels Him to act. For instance, when He decides to create something and declares, "Be," it comes into existence. Take, for example, an individual named "Zayd." The intellect deduces from the external existence of "Zayd" that he was brought into existence by God, recognizing that Zayd's very existence is contingent on this divine command. Similarly, by reflecting upon His exalted attributes that we have alluded to, the intellect extracts from a specific Divine Act that the action has an underlying purpose or benefit.

This reflection upon His words suggests that His actions are both judicious and beneficial, resting on specific purposes. The culmination of this thought is that while God's actions have purposes, they pertain to His creation and not to Him directly.

In summary, His purpose in His actions differs from our purposes in two ways: (1) The Exalted is not perfected by the purposes of His actions and their objectives, unlike us, sentient beings with will, whether human or animal. (2) Neither benefit nor harm govern Him, contrary to others.

As for the well-known debate between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites regarding whether God's actions are motivated by purposes or not, it is as follows: Does He, the Exalted, act based on real benefit, such that the benefit makes Him act rather than refrain, and without it, He wouldn't act? Or does He act without a purpose, merely by a decisive will?

This debate doesn't lead to any conclusive understanding from both perspectives. The truth contradicts both positions. It's a matter between the two as we have pointed out. Hopefully, in what's to come in the book, we might dedicate an independent study to the issue, in which we'll thoroughly examine it both rationally and traditionally, God willing.

In the phrase, "*By the permission of their Lord,*" there's a shift from direct address to indirect reference. The nuance here is the explicit mention of the attribute of Divine Lordship, emphasizing that He is indeed the Lord of those idolaters who associate partners with Him. While the actual target of the address is these idolaters, the Prophet is the one being directly addressed. The mentioning of this attribute, especially at the beginning of this sūrah, serves as an introduction to the arguments for the Unity of Lordship that will be elaborated upon within the sūrah.

The phrase "*to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable*" highlights that everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. The concept of "might" (*ʿizzah*) is juxtaposed with "weakness" (*dhillah*). al-Rāghib defines "*al-ʿizzah*" as a state that protects an individual from being overpowered. The saying *arḍ ʿazāz*, meaning 'firm ground', reflects this concept. The Qur'an further accentuates this by stating: "*Do they seek honor from others? Indeed, all honor belongs to Allah*" (al-Nisa':139). The term *Taʿazzaza al-laḥm* describes meat that has become so tough and firm that it is difficult to reach and chew, (reminiscent of the hardness of *ʿazāz* land.)

The term *al-ʿazīz* denotes an individual who is challenging to overcome

or approach. This concept is encapsulated in the phrase '*azīz al-qawm*, referring to a dominant figure who, despite his ability to overpower others, remains unchallenged. His elevated status is unreachable, with others thwarted even before they attempt to challenge him. The adjective '*azīz* is also invoked to describe something rare and difficult to attain. Additionally, '*azīz* can signify something "arduous," emphasizing the challenges associated with achieving certain tasks. The Almighty declares, "*Grievous to him is your distress*" (al-Tawbah:128). Another verse reads, "*And he browbeats me in speech*" (Ṣād:23), indicating his superior position in the discourse.

God is Mighty (*al-'Azīz*) because He is the Essence that cannot be subdued by anything from any aspect, yet He subdues everything from every aspect. For this reason, true might (*al-'Izzah*) is exclusive to Him. No one else possesses it unless they obtain it from Him and with His permission. As the Almighty stated: "*Do they seek honor with them?* (*If so,*) *indeed all honor belongs to Allah*" (al-Nisa':139). He also declared: "*Whoever seeks honor* (*should know that*) *all honor belongs entirely to Allah*" (al-Fāṭir:10).

*al-Ḥamīd* (The Praiseworthy) is an active participle with the meaning of the passive participle, derived from *al-ḥamd*, which denotes praise for a chosen beauty. Since all beauty culminates in Him, Exalted be He, all praise is directed towards Him, as stated in the verse: "*All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds*" (al-Fatiha:2). An intriguing perspective on this, as cited from Imām al-Rāzī, suggests that the essence of *al-Ḥamīd* is being the Profoundly Knowledgeable and Perfectly Self-Sufficient One (*al-'Ālim al-Ghanī*).

His statement, "*to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy*" instead of saying "into the light" illustrates what the scripture, revealed to His Prophet, leads to. This scripture elucidates in detail: First, it highlights that it is a light that distinguishes truth from falsehood, good from evil, and happiness from misery. Secondly, it is a clear path that gathers all its travelers and ultimately leads them to God, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.

The reason for mentioning the two noble attributes "Almighty (*al-'Azīz*)" and "Praiseworthy (*al-Hamīd*)" is that they serve as an introduction to the main theme of this sūrah, targeting the audience. The core message of this sūrah is to remind them of the immense blessings God has endowed upon them through His Lordship. Through His messengers, He urges them to be grateful and not deny Him. The messengers promise

them that if they believe, they will be admitted to Paradise, and if they disbelieve, they will face His wrath and be subjected to misery and punishment. Therefore, they should fear their Lord, be cautious of opposing His command, and be wary of being ungrateful for His blessings. All might belongs to Him, and nothing can prevent His wrath or punishment from befalling them. He is Praiseworthy in rewarding the believers, punishing the disbelievers, and in all the blessings He bestows upon them, which are countless.

The primary discourse in this sūrah revolves around three attributes: His unity in Lordship, His might, and His praiseworthiness in His actions. Therefore, they should fear His absolute might, be thankful, have faith in His promises, and reflect upon the signs of His Lordship.

In *Rūḥ al-maʿānī* as cited from Abū Hayyan, it is mentioned: "The subtle point (in the verse) is that when God mentioned the sending down of the book and guiding people from darkness to light by their His permission, He appropriately associated these two attributes: 1) The attribute of might, which implies capability and dominance, for revealing such a miraculous book that none but He could manifest. 2) And the attribute of praise, for bestowing the greatest blessing of guiding people from darkness to light. Based on this the reason for this order is evidently clear."

**Comment:** This remark (in *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*) appears entirely unrelated to the context of the chapter's verses. Perhaps it is derived from God's statement describing the Qur'an: "*Indeed, it is an august Book. Falsehood cannot approach it at present or in the future; a* (*revelation gradually*) *sent down from One all-wise, all-laudable*" (Fussilat:41-42). Yet, the contexts are distinct.

In Imām al-Rāzī's exegesis, he posits: "The reason for giving precedence to the mention of 'Almighty' (*al-ʿAzīz*) over 'Praiseworthy' (*al-Ḥamīd*) is because the rightful sequence of knowledge about God begins with acknowledging His Power. Following that is the recognition of Him being All-Knowing. After this, there's the realization of His being completely independent of any needs. 'Almighty' (*al-ʿAzīz*) is the one possessing power, while 'Praiseworthy' (*al-Ḥamīd*) signifies the All-Knowing who is also entirely self-sufficient. Given that the knowledge of His power takes precedence over the knowledge of Him being all-knowing and completely self-reliant, it's fitting to mention 'Almighty' before 'Praiseworthy'."

An intriguingly audacious assertion is the claim by some that the precedence of "Almighty" over "Praiseworthy" is due to the importance given to negative attributes, as indicated by their belief that negation takes precedence over affirmation. Indeed, mightiness, as discussed earlier, is seen as a negative attribute (indicating the absence of any weakness) in contrast to praise, which is affirmative.[1]

Additionally, some suggest that the specific mention of these two attributes is to encourage the pursuit of this path, since it is the path of both the Almighty and the Praiseworthy. Those who embark on it are empowered, and those who tread upon it are praised.

However, a more fitting perspective is to consider these as derived benefits rather than the primary cause, and the more compelling reason has been previously discussed.

اللَّهِ الَّذِى لَهُ مَا فِى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِى الأَرْضِ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ ﴿٢﴾

(14:2) Allah, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And woe to the faithless for a severe punishment

Regarding the statement, "*Allah, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth*," it highlights the attributes of the

1 Editor's note: The discussion surrounding the precedence of "Almighty" over "Praiseworthy" in theological discourse hinges on the differing views concerning the nature of divine attributes. According to some theological viewpoints, negative attributes—those that define God by what He is not—are considered more fundamental than affirmative attributes that describe what God is. In this context, "mightiness" is categorized as a negative attribute because it essentially declares the absence of any weakness or limitation in God. On the other hand, "praise" is an affirmative attribute, as it actively ascribes a quality to God. Those who argue for the precedence of negative attributes like "Almighty" believe that such attributes more closely align with the concept of divine transcendence, as they strip away human-like limitations from the understanding of God. Affirmative attributes like "Praiseworthy," while important, are seen to be secondary in conveying the absolute nature of the divine. This theological stance thus informs the belief that negation takes precedence over affirmation when discussing divine attributes.

Mighty and the Praiseworthy. It refers to the entirety of creation, encompassing both the heavens and the earth and everything they contain. This underscores His absolute and genuine dominion over all.

This verse hints at the argument for His Majesty and Praiseworthiness. Even though God is the one who establishes the truth through His words and ensures that every argument reaches its intended meaning, He still addresses His servants based on their innate nature. Given that He truly possesses every creation, in the genuine sense of ownership, He remains the ultimate authority. Every act of power and dominance stems from Him. He is Mighty in His actions and without constraints. All His actions are commendable, as any criticism arises only when the actor lacks genuine ownership, whether it's recognized rationally, religiously, or traditionally. Every action attributed to Him reflects His rightful dominion, rendering Him Praiseworthy in every deed.

Regarding His proclamation, "*And woe to the faithless for a severe punishment*," it elucidates the manifestation of His Might as He exercises subjugation over those who reject His call and are ungrateful to His blessings.

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٣﴾

> (14:3)—those who prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter, and bar (others) from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked. They are in extreme error.

al-Rāghib, in his *al-Mufradāt*, states regarding the Divine words: "*if they prefer faithlessness to faith*" (al-Tawbah:23), that the term *istaḥabbū* translates as *ātharūhu ʿalayhi*, meaning they favor disbelief over belief. The essence of *al-istiḥbāb* pertains to humanity's natural inclination towards what they love. The concept of preference or *al-īthār* is conveyed by making it transitive with the Arabic particle *ʿalā*. Thus, the verse: "*As for* (*the people of*) *Thamūd, We guided them, but they preferred blindness to guidance*" (Fussilat:17) aptly exemplifies this.

The clause, "*those who prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter,*" implies actively choosing the fleeting pleasures of this existence while neglecting the perpetual life of the Hereafter. Conversely, valuing the Hereafter over this life denotes making eternal life the primary pursuit,

using the earthly life as a bridge to reach it. Solely selecting the Hereafter and entirely disregarding this world is counter intuitive since the worldly life serves as a precursor to the eternal. Such an approach would undermine the essence of the Hereafter and result in its neglect. This world is transient, whereas the Hereafter is everlasting. Real joy in the Hereafter is attained by leveraging the opportunities and experiences this world offers. For those who remain steadfast in their focus on the Hereafter, this life should be seen as a stepping stone towards eternal fulfillment. Yet, those primarily absorbed in this world inadvertently forsake the life of the Hereafter. If the Hereafter is truly recognized, it would invariably become the chief goal. However, if it isn't prioritized, its importance dwindles.

Essentially, one has two choices:

1) Value the Hereafter more, using this world as a necessary conduit.

2) Prioritize this world, making it the ultimate aim, thereby rejecting the Hereafter altogether.

Delving deeper, it's innate for humans to yearn for a blissful existence—a point previously emphasized in our discussions. The Qur'an asserts that life doesn't end with death. From the viewpoint of passing through death, life bifurcates into two phases:

1) The worldly life, bound by the inevitability of death.

2) The life in the Hereafter, where one's fortune or misfortune is contingent upon their earthly deeds, be they righteous or wicked. Given humanity's innate love for life, evading the consequences of one's actions is implausible, as life inherently involves choices.

In the Qur'an, the decisions humans make in their earthly lives—towards righteousness or transgression—are described as *dīn* (a way of life) or *sabīl* (path). Everyone is confronted with a pivotal decision: follow the righteous path or the erroneous one, embrace authentic faith or succumb to falsehoods.

It's a Divine Principle that God guides each species to its unique bliss and ultimate perfection. For humans, this perfection is realized when they live harmoniously in communities and adhere to divine standards set by God. These standards are presented as a lucid religion, in sync with the intrinsic human nature God created. This epitomizes God's path, meant to be both pursued and deeply ingrained in daily life. If one aligns with the Divine guidelines and resonates with their natural tendencies,

they invariably walk God's straight path. However, succumbing to lower instincts, deceived by Satan's mirages, and disregarding God's guidance deviates one from God's true path.

Those who embrace God's path do so out of a divine design that makes them inclined to cherish this path. In contrast, those who veer off have not been directed by God towards the truth. After all, following truth, what remains but misguidance? Although numerous Qur'anic verses echo this sentiment, there's no need to reiterate them here.

With this understanding, it's evident that when God describes disbelievers as "*those who prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter*," it implies their deep-rooted attachment to this world, leading them to renounce the Hereafter—a rejection synonymous with denying God's Unity and prophethood.

Furthermore, when He says, "*and bar* (*others*) *from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked*," it means that instead of embracing the truth, they resist following God's Divine Model and Religion. They discourage others from believing in God, the Hereafter, and adhering to His Laws. They attempt to distort God's path by choosing an alternative societal direction, whatever it might entail. Consequently, God pronounces them profoundly misguided in His statement: "*they are in extreme error*."

The errors in the assertions made by some should be evident from our previous discussions. Specifically, in reference to "*and bar* (*others*) *from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked,*" it implies that they wish to introduce deviation and crookedness (or distortion) into it. Fundamentally, they seek to find flaws in it, thus deterring others from adhering to it.

Clearly, the claim that they perceive crookedness in it, subsequently defaming it, is baseless. They aim to malign it based on this perceived distortion. Equally groundless is the assertion that they seek to mislead and sway its followers by discrediting it. Their approach suggests a distorted understanding of the religion. This distortion is indicative of the believers' misinterpretation. The fallacy of these claims is evident.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

(14:4) We did not send any apostle except with the language of his people, so that he might make (Our messages) clear to them.

> Then Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and He guides whomsoever He wishes, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.

His statement, "We did not send any apostle except with the language of his people, so that he might make (Our messages) clear to them..." denotes that *Lisān* refers to "language" in this context. This interpretation is further corroborated by the verse: "in a clear Arabic language (*bi lisānin ʿarabīyan mubīn*)" (al-Shuʿarā':195).

The pronoun in "his people" (*qawmihi*) refers to the "messenger" (*rasūl*), while the pronoun "to them" (*lahum*) points to "his people" (*qawmihi*). The underlying message is that every messenger was dispatched speaking the language of his own community to ensure effective communication.

Contending that "his people" (*qawmihi*) solely relates to Prophet Muḥammad is misleading. Such a stance would imply that all Divine revelations were transmitted in Arabic. This is a flawed representation. For example, inferring that "for them" (*lahum*) pertains to "the Prophet's people" would insinuate that the Torah was relayed in Arabic to Mūsā for the Arabs, a viewpoint discussed in *al-Kashshāf*.

The rationale behind sending a messenger in his people's language is to ensure effective communication with those he interacts and lives among. It isn't about ancestral languages. Consider Lot's migration from Chaldea, where Syriac was spoken, to Mu'tafakāt, a Hebrew-speaking region. Despite hailing from a different linguistic backdrop, God still identified the inhabitants of Mu'tafakāt as His chosen people. God selected Lot to guide them, saved him and his believers, but condemned the rest, including his wife, who originated from Mu'tafakāt. The Qur'an recounts this episode in the verse: "*Thereupon Lot believed in him, and he said, 'Indeed I am migrating toward my Lord*'" (al-Furqān:26). This narrative sheds light on the divine intention behind dispatching messengers conversant in the languages of their respective communities.

Regarding those messengers dispatched to diverse nations, especially the chief prophets, evidence suggests they extended their outreach beyond their native linguistic domains. For instance, God relates Abraham's call to the Arab inhabitants of Ḥijāz for Hajj, Moses's plea to Pharaoh and his people to embrace the faith, and Prophet Muḥammad's global summons. The Qur'an recounts the various invitations extended to Christians, Jews,

and others, emphasizing the widespread acceptance of the faith across various communities during Prophet Muḥammad's time. Moreover, Noah's universal message bolsters this understanding.

In this context, the verse: "*We did not send any apostle except with the language of his people, so that he might make* (*Our messages*) *clear to them,*" signifies that God's intent was not to endow messengers with miraculous linguistic skills, nor to burden them with divine responsibilities. Instead, they were sent conversant in the prevalent language, ensuring clear communication. Their primary role was to expound upon the divine revelations' objectives. Guidance or misguidance beyond this realm lies solely with God. Neither His messengers nor any other entities partake in this exclusive divine right.

Regarding the statement: "*Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and He guides whomsoever He wishes,*" it underscores the notion that guidance and misguidance are solely God's purview. Yet, He assures us that this divine decree operates within a well-defined, unwavering system. Those who heed the truth receive God's guidance, while those who reject it and yield to their base desires face divine misguidance. This misguidance is metaphorical and shouldn't be construed as a punitive act initiated by God.

In sum, God's boundless might and His decree are evident in the Qur'an's verses, emphasizing that His guidance is not arbitrary, and both guidance and misguidance serve to showcase His power and wisdom.

He, the Most Sublime, prioritized misguidance over guidance when He said: "*Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and He guides whomsoever He wishes.*" This prioritization necessitates clarification. Considering the discourse is based on His absolute might, it was imperative to elucidate that the misguidance of those who stray, just like the guidance of those who find the right path, is solely by His divine decree. He is neither overpowered in His will nor can anyone contest His dominion. It should never occur to any heedless person that God describes Himself with absolute might, being unconquerable and invincible, yet when He calls upon the people, they don't respond to His call, and when He commands or prohibits them, they disobey and don't obey. Isn't this perceived dominance over Him and overpowering Him, making Him seem as though He is overpowered and subdued?

It's as if He, the Most High, responded to this by clarifying that the

essence of His call is to dispatch a messenger proficient in the language of his people, to clarify to them what would bring them happiness from what would lead to their misery. As for the misguidance of those who stray from the path, just like the guidance of those who follow it, it is by God's decree and permission. God forbid that anyone should overpower Him in His dominion or act within His realm without His permission.

The misguidance of those who stray serves as a testament to His might, and it doesn't contradict it, just as the guidance of those who are guided does. Thus, He concludes the verse with: "*And He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.*" Indeed, He is the Mighty, where the misguidance of those who stray neither overpowers Him nor harms Him, and the guidance of those who are rightly guided neither benefits Him. Being Wise, He doesn't act arbitrarily or without purpose; rather, His actions adhere to a refined and consistent system.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ۝٥

(14:5) Certainly We sent Moses with Our signs: 'Lead your people out from darkness into light and remind them of Allah's (holy) days. There are indeed signs in that for every patient and grateful (servant).'

Considering the primary discourse of this Sūrah revolves around warning and reminding of God's majesty, it is apt to mention the dispatching of Moses with signs to guide his people. Moses's mission offers one of the most lucid demonstrations of the manifestation of Divine Majesty among the prophets. As God stated about him: "*Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs and a manifest authority,*" (Ghāfir:23) and, recounting his words: "*Do not defy Allah. Indeed I bring you a manifest authority*" (al-Dukhān:19).

The verse in question parallels the message of the previous verse: "*A Book We have sent down to you so that you may lead mankind out of darkness into light by the command of their Lord.*" The underlying motif across these verses is the call towards spiritual ascension and soulful enrichment. This theme is further underscored in the verse: "*We have indeed revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him*" (al-Nisa':163).

The viewpoint suggesting that this verse seeks to detail the broader statement, "We did not send any messenger except in the language of his people, so that he could explain to them clearly," seems quite removed from the actual intent. Similarly distant in perspective is the notion that "the signs with which Moses was dispatched" solely refers to the Torah's verses, excluding his other miraculous acts like the serpent, the radiant hand, and others.

It's essential to note that in the Qur'an, God does not classify the Torah as a symbol validating Moses's prophethood. There isn't any mention of Him sending Moses with the Torah; rather, the Qur'an emphasizes that He revealed the Torah to Moses.

The proclamation, "*Lead your people out from darkness into light and remind them of Allah's* (*holy*) *days*" is not expressly conditional upon divine permission, unlike the directive to Prophet Muhammad: "*so that you may bring people out of darkness into light by the command of their Lord*." The phrase "bring your people" implicitly conveys God's permission, distinguishing it from the previously cited directive.

Regarding the phrase "*and remind them of Allah's* (*holy*) *days,*" it undoubtedly refers to specific days. While every day inherently belongs to God, certain days are distinctly attributed to Him due to the prominent manifestation of His decree. These days include significant moments when His supremacy and unity are either displayed or destined to be revealed. Prominent among these are the day of one's demise, emphasizing the dominion of the Hereafter, and the Day of Resurrection, a day where each soul stands solitary, with all affairs solely under God's jurisdiction. Other notable days include when divine retribution befell communities like those of Noah, ʿĀd, and Thamūd.

Some days showcase His unique blessings, for instance, when Noah and his followers disembarked the ark, blessed and at peace, or when Abraham emerged unscathed from the flames. Such days underscore God's power.

While some exegetes interpret the "days of God" as moments when God's blessings manifest, basing this on subsequent verses discussing His blessings, others linking these days to God's punishments may not be considering the broader context. Both blessings and retributions reflect God's divine will and majesty.

The verse concludes with: "Indeed, in that are signs for everyone patient

and grateful." The term *al-ṣabbār* signifies immense patience during adversity, while *al-shakūr* denotes profound gratitude for received blessings.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated that Aḥmad reported from Abī Dharr who said that the Messenger of God said: "God did not send any prophet except with the language of his people." Also, it was narrated by al-Nasā'ī, ʿAbdullāh b. Aḥmad in *Zawā'id al-Musnad*, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-Īmān* from Ubayy b. Kaʿb concerning the Prophet's statement: "And remind them of the (holy) days of God." He said: "The blessings of God and His bounties."

**Author's comment:** This is an elucidation of some of the truths, and similar meanings were narrated by al-Ṭabarī and al-ʿAyyāshī from al-Ṣādiq.

(2) In *Amālī of the Shaykh*, with its chain of transmission from ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās and Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh in a lengthy tradition about the Prophet, he said: "The days of God are His blessings, trials, and His wonders. Glory be to Him."

(3) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is mentioned: "The days of God are three: the day of al-Qā'im (Imām al-Mahdī ), the day of death, and the day of resurrection."

**Author's comment:** What is meant is an elucidation of His majestic days, not an absolute enumeration of His days.

(4) In *Ruh al-maʿānī,* through its chain of narrators, it is reported from Muthannā al-Ḥanāṭ from Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon them) who said: "The days of God are three: the day when al-Qā'im (Imām al-Mahdī) rises, the day of return, and the day of resurrection."

**Author's comment:** This is similar to the previous one, and the variance in narrations regarding the enumeration of truths supports what we previously elucidated about the verse.

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## Verses 6-18

Within these verses, there's a mention of a snapshot of God's blessings and retributions during His designated days. The apparent context of these verses suggests that they predominantly emanate from the words of Moses, except for the Divine statement: "*And when your Lord proclaimed*." In this segment, Moses recalls to his people some of the 'Days of God', times characterized by His Absolute Majesty, leading to the bestowal of blessings or retributions. Each incident is meticulously placed, in accordance with His Ultimate Wisdom.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنْجَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾

(14:6) When Moses said to his people, 'Remember Allah's blessing upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's clan who inflicted a terrible torment on you, and slaughtered your sons and spared your women, and in that there was a great test from your Lord.

According to al-Rāghib, the term *al-sawm* means setting out in search of something. This term conveys dual concepts of moving forward and seeking. Hence, within the context of this verse, it can be interpreted as the act of inflicting torment while maintaining life.

The essence of the verse is: "O Messenger, to fortify their belief, remind them that God is Mighty and Worthy of Praise. When Moses said to his people, the Children of Israel: 'Recall God's favor upon you when He saved you from Pharaoh's family, especially the Copts, who were persistent in tormenting you. They frequently slaughtered your male children and kept your women alive with the intention of enslaving them. This ordeal was a significant test and tribulation from your Lord.'"

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي

لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

(14:7) And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you (in blessing), but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe.'

In *Majma' al-bayyān al-bayān*, it is mentioned that the word *al-ta'addhun* translates as "notification" or "declaration." It is said: *ādhana* and *tu'addhinu*, are analogous to the terms *awʿada* and *tuwaʿdu*.

Regarding this verse, "*And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you* (*in blessing*)*, but if you are ungrateful*," it's posited that this proclamation serves as a reminder rather than an initiation. From this perspective, the phrase "*And when your Lord proclaimed*" is linked with "*Remember Allah's blessing upon you*." The more fitting arrangement, considering traditional Arabic structures, would be: 'Remember when He saved you, bestowed His favor upon you, and when your Lord proclaimed...'

Some interpretations suggest the phrase "*And when your Lord proclaimed*" to be linked with "*when He delivered you*." This proclamation itself is a blessing, considering it induces both encouragement and caution, driving individuals toward the good of this world and the Hereafter.

This declaration, according to the narrative, serves as a boon for the grateful. For the ungrateful, however, it stands as a warning and a sign of loss. It aligns with previous discussions, devoid of specific limitations or exclusions.

Evidently, this declaration operates independently. God elucidates the essence of gratitude, implying the appropriate utilization of blessings in a manner that recalls the giver's generosity. Gratitude results in augmented blessings, whereas ingratitude leads to severe consequences. This is reflected, for example, in the story of Noah, where he turns to God, pleading with his community: "*Plead to your Lord for forgiveness. Indeed, He is all-forgiving. He will send for you abundant rains from the sky, and aid you with wealth and sons, and provide you with gardens and provide you with streams*" (Nūḥ:10-12).

One of the notable aspects of this verse, highlighted by some scholars, is its explicit promise of reward and its subtle hint at punishment. God

states, "*I will surely enhance you* (*in blessing*)," but when referring to punishment, He says, "*My punishment is indeed severe*," instead of declaring, "I will surely punish you." This is a typical approach of the noble, when balancing promises and warnings.

The verse is broad in scope, without any indications limiting its contents concerning rewards or punishments, exclusively to this world or the Hereafter. The effects of faith, disbelief, righteousness, and transgression on the matters of this life and the Hereafter are well-established in the Qur'an.

The verse has been cited to emphasize the obligation of showing gratitude. However, its primary emphasis is on the perils of disbelief. While God indicates that His punishment is severe, He doesn't explicitly declare that every act of disbelief will culminate in punishment.

وَقَالَ مُوسَى إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

(14:8) And Moses said, 'Should you be faithless—you and everyone on the earth, all together—indeed Allah is all-sufficient, all-laudable.'

When God decreed gratitude for His benevolence and highlighted the augmentation of His blessings for the grateful, while indicating the potential retribution for the ungrateful, He, in His absolute might, bolstered this sentiment with the words of Moses. This emphasis is evident when He declares: "*And Moses said*," a proclamation seamlessly spanning the subsequent ten verses.

Regarding God's inherent self-sufficiency, even if every soul on Earth were to reject faith, His independence remains unaffected. He neither gains from human gratitude nor is impacted by their disbelief. The repercussions of humanity's actions, be they positive or negative, solely befall them. His laudable nature is accentuated because praise emerges from recognizing and vocalizing the admirable and righteous deeds of the one being extolled. Each act of God shines with unparalleled beauty and is universally commendable, manifesting His sheer splendor. It's impossible to eclipse or lessen His grandeur. Thus, He is forever praiseworthy, irrespective of whether an observer voices this admiration or remains silent.

Furthermore, every creation sings His praises through its mere existence. This includes even those who overlook His benevolence, as He affirmed: "*There is not a thing but celebrates His praise*" (al-Isrā':44). He stands esteemed and worthy of admiration, regardless of whether humans express their reverence or withhold it. Ultimately, every ounce of praise is His due, regardless of whether it's directly attributed to Him or otherwise.

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٩﴾

(14:9) Has there not come to you the account of those who were before you—the people of Noah, ʿĀd and Thamūd, and those who were after them, whom no one knows (well) except Allah? Their apostles brought them manifest proofs, but they did not respond to them (lit. "but they put their hands in their mouths"), and said, 'We disbelieve in what you have been sent with. Indeed we have grave doubts concerning that to which you invite us.'

His statement, "*Has there not come to you the account of those who were before you—the people of Noah, ʿĀd, and Thamūd...,*" is a reflection of Moses' discourse, reminding his people of God's past decrees. Among them were nations whose legacy vanished, traces faded, and narratives silenced. Only God truly knows their intricate histories, exemplified by the likes of Noah, ʿĀd, Thamūd, and other subsequent nations.

From this, we deduce two things: First, the term "news" (*naba'*) in "*Has there not come to you the account of those who were before you*" relates to their downfall and extinction. The term *naba'* signifies noteworthy news that demands attention. This interpretation doesn't conflict with the later part of the verse: "*and those who were after them, whom no one knows* (*well*) *except Allah?*"

Second, in referencing the people of Noah, ʿĀd, and Thamūd, they're set as illustrative examples. The phrase "*and those who were after them, whom no one knows* (*well*) *except Allah?*" expands on the earlier mention of

"*those who were before you*." It implies a dearth of comprehensive historical knowledge regarding their specific circumstances.

It's plausible that "*and those who were after them, whom no one knows* (*well*) *except Allah?*" acts as a parenthetical statement. While the aforementioned context seems more fitting, some interpretations, deeming this segment as a predicate to "*and those who were after them*," appear illogical upon close examination.

The segment, "*Their apostles brought them manifest proofs,*" indicates that the messengers presented unequivocal evidence, clarifying the truth. Yet, their communities suppressed them, hindering the truth's articulation and silencing their prophets. The phrases "their hands" (*aydīhim*) and "their mouths" (*afwāhihim*) are metaphorical, portraying the messengers as silenced, suggesting an imposed silence upon them.

There are multiple scholarly interpretations of this verse, which include:

(1) The disbelievers metaphorically stifled the messengers, expressing their rejection.
(2) The disbelievers signaled the messengers to remain silent, akin to how one might gesture another to stop speaking.
(3) The intense anger of the disbelievers led them to bite their fingers upon hearing the prophets' messages.
(4) "The hands" symbolize divine proofs, implying the people returned these proofs to their origin—the messengers.
(5) "The hands" represent the blessings and teachings of the prophets.
(6) "The hands" symbolize blessings, indicating the disbelievers verbally rejected the teachings and blessings of the prophets.

God's word surpasses these interpretations, as its profundity cannot be confined to such limited viewpoints.

The sentence, "*Their apostles brought them manifest proofs, but they did not respond to them, and said, 'We disbelieve in what you have been sent with. Indeed we have grave doubts concerning that to which you invite us*" elucidates the rejection of the divine mandate. Their initial rejection of what the apostles presented signifies a denial of divine legislation, while their subsequent doubts underscore their skepticism towards the central message of the Unity of Lordship (*tawḥīd al-Rubūbīyyah*).

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ

لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾

(14:10) Their apostles said, 'Is there any doubt about Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth?! He calls you to forgive you a part of your sins, and grants you respite until a specified time.' They said, 'You are nothing but humans like us who desire to bar us from what our fathers used to worship. So bring us a manifest authority.'

According to al-Rāghib, the root of the word *al-faṭr* signifies "cleaving something vertically." The phrase *faṭartu al-shay' faṭran* translates to "I split it vertically" (*shaqaqtuhu ṭūlan*). Expressions like *afṭara shay' fuṭūra* and *infaṭara infiṭāran* indicate something nearing the point of splitting. In the Qur'an, when attributed to God, it refers to the act of bringing into existence through divine providence. It's as though God split non-existence, bringing forth entities from within. Clearly, the only being capable of transitioning non-existence into existence is Him. All that exists relies on His support. Without it, they would cease to be. This is echoed in the Qur'an: "*Indeed Allah sustains the heavens and the earth lest they should fall apart, and if they were to fall apart, there is none who can sustain them except Him*" (al-Fāṭir:41).

Given this interpretation, defining *faṭara* as "to create" (*khalaqa*), which implies assembling components, doesn't seem accurate. This view is strengthened by the assertion that if *faṭara* was equivalent to "to create" (*khalaqa*), then the evidence hinted at in the clause "*the originator of the heavens and the earth*" would be misleading. This is because idolaters didn't deny a creator of the universe. They also didn't refute the claim that this creator was God and not some other entity. Their primary disagreement was about the unity of divine lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbīyyah*) and servitude (*tawḥīd al-'ubūdīyyah*), indicating that only God is the Lord and the one worthy of worship. The evidence pointing towards Him as the creator of the heavens and the earth doesn't align with this interpretation.

However, when the Qur'an mentions: "*Their apostles said, 'Is there any doubt about Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth?! He invites*

*you to forgive some of your sins and gives you respite until a specified time,*'" it counters the claim, "*We disbelieve in what you have been sent with. Indeed, we have grave doubts about what you invite us to*" (14:9). As you're aware, this statement encapsulates two points of contention: (1) their rejection of prophethood and (2) their doubts concerning the Unity of Lordship. The messenger's aforementioned declaration directly counters these two facets of their argument.

The messengers' statement: "*Is there any doubt about Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth?*" stands as a testament to the Unity of Lordship. If the intent was solely to address the disbelievers' rejection without providing an evidential basis, there wouldn't be a need to mention the descriptor: "*the originator of the heavens and the earth*." By invoking this attribute, it indicates that this declaration dispels all uncertainties and reservations about Him.

What we perceive, initially, from our understanding of the observable universe, which consists of numerous entities, is that each entity is limited in its existence and distinct from others. Their existence is not inherent nor self-sustained; otherwise, they wouldn't undergo change or cease to exist. Their existence, as well as their attributes and effects, are dependent on and for something else, which we refer to as "*Allah*," honored be His name.

It is He, the Exalted, who brings the universe and every component within it into existence, delineates them, and differentiates them from others. He is inherently existent, without limits. Otherwise, He would need another entity to define Him. Therefore, He is singular and unique. An entity without defined boundaries cannot be multiplied or divided, reinforcing His Oneness.

In His oneness, He oversees and manages every matter just as He originates it, because He is the Master of their existence, and everything relates back to its existence. No other entity shares with Him in anything because nothing other than Him possesses control over itself or others. Hence, He, the Exalted, is the Lord of everything, with no other lord beside Him, just as He is the originator of everything, with no one else doing so.

This is a comprehensive proof, easily graspable, even for simple minds. A person naturally submits to the evident reality of the observable universe, as opposed to considering it a mere illusion, as some skeptics and sophists might suggest. This proof confirms the Oneness of God and Lordship,

which is essential when discussing the rejection of idolatry.

From here, it becomes clear how flawed the claim is of those who say that the statement: "*Is there any doubt about Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth?*" is merely an argument to prove the existence of a Creator. Likewise, it refutes those who suggest that the statement is merely about God's providence linked to the Unity of Lordship. Rather, the proof is of God's existence, which is foundational for everything and every effect that emerges from it. As a result, His Unity in Lordship is affirmed, and it dismisses the doubts raised by them when they say, "*We disbelieve in what you have been sent with. Indeed we have grave doubts concerning that to which you invite us.*"

Their saying, "*He invites you so that He may forgive some of your sins and grant you respite to an appointed term,*" points to the argument of prophethood, which they denied by saying, "*We have disbelieved in what you have been sent with.*" Their intention in this context is their rejection of the messengers' religion and the divine laws revealed to them.

This argument suggests that, as part of God's ongoing practice, everything is guided towards its perfection and specific happiness. Humans are among these beings who are encompassed by divine guidance. It's necessary in divine care that humans are guided to the happiness of their life.

Yet, their life is eternal, not confined to this world and not terminated by death. Their happiness in life is to live in this world with tranquillity, grounded in the balance of their powers, enjoying life's pleasures, such as food, drink, clothing, marriage, and more—these are the righteous deeds. In the Hereafter, their happiness is based on what they have acquired in terms of true beliefs and good deeds.

Although humans are naturally equipped with an inclination that reminds them of the right beliefs and good actions, they are also inclined towards social life, which often calls them to follow their desires, commit injustices, and deviate. The mere natural reminder isn't sufficient to lead them to a just and rightful path in beliefs and actions. Otherwise, human society wouldn't become corrupt, and no individual would deviate, especially when they are equipped with natural inclination.

Therefore, in this divine care, it is essential to provide humanity, in addition to their innate call towards righteousness and happiness, with another means to receive divine guidance, which is prophethood. This

is a pure human station where the true beliefs and righteous actions are revealed to him through divine inspiration and unseen communication. Adhering to it ensures individual and societal happiness in this world and the Hereafter.[1]

Concerning worldly happiness, it has been repeatedly mentioned that there's a direct link between committing sins and injustices and the subsequent divine punishments leading to destruction. If the society remained upright and adhered to natural righteousness, they would be spared from sudden calamities, living out their natural lifespan.

And as for the happiness of the Hereafter, adhering to the divine call, or in other words, having faith and being God-conscious, beautifies the soul with a suitable disposition and removes the tarnish of sins proportional to one's adherence.

His Lordship, which requires the best possible management and guidance of every kind to its ultimate happiness, necessitates that He pays special attention to humans by sending messengers from among them to them, inviting people through His messengers to faith and righteous deeds. This completes their happiness in this world and the Hereafter. As for this world, it's about being spared from sudden divine retributions, and as for the Hereafter, it's about divine forgiveness in proportion to their acquired faith and righteous deeds.

Once you understand what has been mentioned, you'll recognize that God's statement, wherein He says about the messengers, "*He invites you so that He may forgive some of your sins and grant you respite to an appointed term,*" is their indication to the general argument of prophethood. The statement "*so that He may forgive*" and so on refers to the ultimate aim of the call in the Hereafter, and "*grant you respite*" and so on indicates its worldly objective. Priority is given to the Hereafter over this world because the Hereafter is the primary goal and the eternal abode.

In their statements, they attributed the call to God Almighty to emphasize the truth against the claim of the disbelievers who said, "you call us to Him," attributing it to the messengers. The phrase "some of your sins"

1 Editor's note: In short, humans possess an innate moral compass, or *fitrah*, guiding them towards virtue. However, external societal influences can divert them from this path. Divine intervention through prophethood reinforces this inner guidance, ensuring righteousness in this life and the next.

seems to be specific, possibly indicating that forgiveness is in proportion to obedience. Human society never lacks sins that necessitate retribution. Thus, only some of the community's sins are forgiven, not all of them. Understand this well.

Some have mentioned that the forgiveness referred to is solely about the rights of God and not concerning the rights of the people. This is countered by authentic narrations from the Prophet that say that Islam nullifies what precedes it.

Some argue that the word "some" (*min*) is redundant, supporting their view with another verse that says: "*He forgives your sins*" (al-Ṣaff:12) without the word "some."

The addition of the word "*min*" is typically in negative contexts (negations) rather than affirmative ones, as illustrated by the statement "No man came to me" (*ma jaa'ani min rajul*). Moreover, "*min*" is often used with indefinite nouns (*al-asmā' al-nakirah*) as opposed to definite nouns (*al-asmā' al-ma'rifah*), as has been explained in grammatical discussions.

While the context of the two verses differs, the phrase "*He will forgive you your sins*" seemingly suggests universal forgiveness. However, it specifically pertains to the themes of faith and striving, as evident in: "*Have faith in Allah and His Apostle, and wage jihad in the way of Allah with your persons and possessions. That is better for you, should you know. He will forgive you your sins*" (al-Ṣaff:11-12). In a similar vein, God recounts Noah's words, who is the first among the mentioned prophets, as: "*Worship Allah, and be wary of Him, and obey me, that He may forgive you some of your sins and reprieve you until a specified term*" (Nūḥ:3-4). This aligns with the verse we are examining, clearly indicating that the aspect of partiality or specificity is not incidental.

Among the explanations offered for this verse is the notion that what is meant by 'a portion' is actually 'the entirety', but in a broad sense. Some argue that the verse refers to the forgiveness of sins committed prior to embracing faith, while sins committed afterward are not addressed. Others believe it pertains to the forgiveness of major sins, which constitute only a portion of all sins. However, these explanations are considered weak and aren't given much weight.

al-Zamakhshari in *al-Kashshāf* commented: "If you ask, what is the meaning of specificity in His saying, '*some of your sins*' my response is: From

what I have understood, this phrase appears in this manner only when addressing the disbelievers, as in His saying: '*Fear Him and obey me, that He may forgive you some of your sins*' (Nūḥ:3-4) and '*O our people, respond to Allah's summoner and believe in Him; He will forgive you some of your sins*' (al-Aḥqāf:31). However, when addressing the believers, it is stated as: '*Shall I show you a trade that will save you from a painful punishment?* —until He says— *He will forgive you your sins*' (al-Ṣaff:10-12). And there are other instances like these which you'll notice upon a thorough review. This distinction is made to differentiate between the two groups and so as not to equate the two parties regarding the promised fate."

**Comment:** It seems his intention is to convey that the sins forgiven for both groups are the same, encompassing all sins. However, the esteemed position of faith necessitates that there is explicit mention of the forgiveness of all sins for the believers, while the promise to the disbelievers is limited to the forgiveness of *some* sins, leaving the rest silent. The forgiveness of some sins does not contradict the forgiveness of others. This could be his intended meaning. Otherwise, merely distinguishing between the two addresses does not result in any deviation from reality.

The clause, "*and grants you respite until a specified time*" means that He will not hasten punishment or destruction upon you, but rather delay it until a predetermined time that is unchangeable, as He has declared it to you, and His decree is immutable. It has been previously discussed in the exegesis of the beginning of Sūrah al-An'am that there are two types of appointed terms: a suspended, undetermined term, and a specified term that cannot be postponed.

Evidence supporting our aforementioned point is Noah's statement to his people in this context, as recounted by the Almighty God: "*and respite you until a specified time; Indeed when Allah's* (*appointed*) *time comes, it cannot be deferred, if you know*" (Nūḥ:4).

In reference to the clause, "*They said, 'You are nothing but humans like us who desire to bar us from what our fathers used to worship. So bring us a manifest authority,*'" it was previously discussed under the topic of 'prophethood' in the second part of the book that a miraculous sign serves as general evidence of a prophet's authenticity, rather than a universal or specific proof. The realms of revelation and prophethood, connecting with the unseen, transcend typical human understanding. As such, anyone

professing this connection must substantiate their claim. The most compelling validation would be presenting another supernatural phenomenon, supporting this ethereal connection's genuineness. This stance stems from the principle that if one norm can be defied, so can its equivalents.[1]

When the messengers presented their general prophethood to the disbelievers of their nations with their saying, "*He calls you to forgive you a part of your sins, and grants you respite until a specified time*," the disbelievers responded by asking for evidence of their prophethood. They excused their skepticism by stating, "You are but humans like us." They then explicitly requested a miraculous sign as proof, saying, "*So bring us a manifest authority*."

The essence of their response was: While we accept the notion that divine care calls us towards forgiveness and mercy, we do not accept that this call comes through you as you claim. For you are merely humans like us, offering nothing superior. If humanity alone warranted this, we would have perceived it in ourselves. If you are truthful in your claim, present us with clear authority—a compelling proof that resonates with our intellect and compels us to recognize your prophethood. This would be a miraculous sign that breaks the norm, just as what you proclaim is extraordinary.

From this explanation, it's evident that their statement serves to reject the claim. Their saying, "You are but humans like us," is the foundation of their rejection, and their request, "So bring us a manifest authority," specifies the evidence they seek.

Furthermore, their statement, "*who desire to bar us from what our fathers used to worship*," is an objection rooted between their rejection and its basis. Its implication is that since you are humans like us with no special merit, there's no reason for us to accept something from you that we don't find in ourselves or witness from our peers. What we've observed is that such claims usually arise from worldly, materialistic motives. Thus, it seems you merely wish to divert us from our ancestral traditions and

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1 Editor's note: The emphasis on a miraculous sign distinguishes it from more localized indicators of prophethood. Prophets' connection to the unseen transcends regular human understanding, hence the need for extraordinary evidence. The idea that defying one norm implies the potential to defy similar norms highlights the consistency in divine principles related to prophethood and revelation.

established ways.

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(14:11) Their messengers said to them, 'Indeed we are just human beings like yourselves; but Allah favors whomever of His servants that He wishes. We may not bring you an authority except by Allah's leave, and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust.

This verse presents the messengers' response to the skepticism surrounding their messengership. The disbelievers argued, "You are humans just like us and do not have a divine identity to connect with the unseen. If you are truthful about this unseen capability, then present us with a manifest authority (*sulṭān mubīn*)."

The essence of the messengers' reply acknowledges their shared humanity with the disbelievers. Yet, being human does not exclude the possibility of possessing unique divine attributes, like revelation and prophethood. Just as certain intellectual and physical human perfections—like beauty, sound reasoning, and intelligence—are present in some individuals and not others, it's plausible for God to bestow the gift of revelation and prophethood upon select individuals. As the verse states, "*Allah favors whomever of His servants that He wishes.*"

As for their demand, "*So bring us a manifest authority*," it is premised on the idea that a prophet possesses a celestial identity and an effective unseen capability to achieve whatever he desires. However, this is not the case. A prophet is merely a human like you, to whom the message is revealed. He has no authority over matters, and he cannot produce a sign on his own unless God wills and permits it.

The messengers' assertion, "*Indeed we are just human beings like yourselves*," is an acknowledgment of the disbelievers' statement, "*You are nothing but humans like us*." However, it's conveyed to derive a different conclusion from what the disbelievers inferred. The statement, "*Allah favors whomever of His servants that He wishes*," points to a premise that, when combined, leads to the desired conclusion. Their remark, "*We may not bring you an authority except by Allah's leave*," is their response derived

from their shared humanity with the disbelievers.

Concluding their statement with, "*In Allah let all the faithful put their trust*," serves to highlight a secondary argument that entrusts all matters, including the matter of the miraculous sign, entirely to God. This argument is particularly pertinent to the believers. In essence, faith in God necessitates the understanding that the power to present such signs lies solely with Him. For all power and strength are exclusively His domain; no one else possesses any of it except by His permission..

This is because He is God, of exalted status. From Him everything originates, to Him everything returns, and through Him everything is sustained. He is the Lord of all, overseeing and managing everything. No entity holds authority over any matter except by His permission. He is the guardian and sustainer of everything, responsible for all matters referred back to Him. Therefore, a believer must rely on his Lord in all affairs, even in actions attributed to him, recognizing that all strength and power belong solely to Him, the Most Glorified. As for the messenger, he must acknowledge that he cannot produce a miraculous sign without the permission of God.

The verse clearly indicates that the messengers did not claim an inability to produce the miraculous sign referred to as a "manifest authority." Instead, they asserted that they couldn't act autonomously in this regard without the permission of God, the Most Glorified. They provided evidence for this in two main points.

وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَىٰ مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

(14:12) And why should we not put our trust in Allah, seeing that He has guided us in our ways? Surely, we will put up patiently with whatever torment you may inflict upon us, and in Allah let all the trusting put their trust.'

This is an interrogative statement, where the question implies negation. The phrase "*He has guided us in our ways*" is a circumstantial clause referring to "us." The "ways" of the prophets and messengers refer to the religious laws they preached. As the Almighty says, "*Say, 'This is my way. I summon to Allah with insight'*" (Yūsuf:108). The implication is: How

could we possibly have any excuse not to trust in God when He has guided us, and we had no hand in this blessing and happiness He granted us? If He, the Most Glorious, has acted so benevolently towards us, it becomes obligatory to place our trust in Him for all matters.

Indeed, this presents a secondary argument on the necessity of reliance on Him, establishing trust entirely through His influence, much like how the previous argument was deduced by contemplating the effective cause itself. The conclusive proof is that His guidance towards our path is evidence of the necessity to trust in Him, for He never betrays His servants and seeks only good for them. With the presence of this proof for trust, there's no rationale for any proof against trust being a valid excuse for us. Thus, there's no way for us not to trust in the Almighty.

The statement, "*in Allah let all the trusting put their trust,*" follows the same pattern as the "*lām*" particle, and "*And why should we not put our trust in Allah, seeing that He has guided us in our ways*" follows the pattern of the "*inn*" particle. Ponder upon this eloquent explanation and the straightforward yet profound argument presented by the Noble Qur'an in the most concise words.[1]

The phrase, "*We will surely put up patiently with whatever torment you inflict upon us*," stems from the derivation of patience from the obligation of placing trust in Him. That is, if it's obligatory to trust in Him, and we are believers who have been guided, then we will endure the harm you inflict upon us in the path of calling to Him, relying on Him, until He decrees what He wills and acts according to His wish, without us resorting to any apparent power or strength we might possess.

The statement, "*in Allah let all the trusting put their trust,*" is predicated

1 Editor's note: The Arabic language is rich in its grammatical and rhetorical devices. One such device is the use of the letter "*lām*" for emphasis, especially to denote obligation or necessity. When the statement says "follows the pattern of the '*lām*'," it's referring to the emphasis placed on the act of reliance on God. The implication is that those who truly understand the essence of reliance (or trust) should undoubtedly place that reliance on God. While, the Arabic word "*inn*" is often used to introduce a conditional statement or to emphasize the truth of a statement. The phrase "*And why shouldn't we rely on God and He has guided us to our paths*" uses this construct to underscore the logic behind relying on God: If He has guided believers to the right path, then it's only fitting that they should trust in Him wholeheartedly.

on prioritization, meaning anyone who embodies trust should place their trust in God, be they believers or otherwise. There's no other evidence for this. However, true reliance in its essence can only be manifested by a believer. They acknowledge that all matters belong to God and thus, they can only obey His commands, refrain from His prohibitions, accept His decrees, and show displeasure for what He dislikes. This is the essence of faith.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ ﴿١٤﴾

(14:13-14) But the faithless said to their apostles, 'Surely we will expel you from our land, or you shall revert to our creed.' Thereat their Lord revealed to them: 'We will surely destroy the wrongdoers, and surely We will settle you in the land after them. This (promise) is for someone who is awed to stand before Me (or fears my station) and fears My threat.'

This signifies their threat after being unsuccessful in countering the messengers and being defeated in their debates. The pronouncement "*We will surely expel you...*" addresses not only the messengers but also those who believed alongside them. The disbelievers were not going to be content with only the messengers reverting to their previous beliefs; they also wanted their followers to abandon monotheism.

God explicitly mentions such scenarios in the stories of some prophets, as with the case of Shu'ayb where He declares: "*The elite of his people who were arrogant said, 'O Shu'ayb, we will surely expel you and the faithful who are with you from our town, or else you shall revert to our creed*'" (al-A'rāf:88).

The statement "*or you shall revert to our creed*" conveys the idea of transitioning from one state to another, regardless of whether that state was once held. The phrasing "to our religion" suggests a return to a previous state, dispelling the implication that the messengers might have once followed the disbelievers' beliefs.[1]

1 Editor's note: The verb "to revert" (from Arabic *lataʿūdunna*) in this context doesn't simply denote coming back to a previous state, but rather a transition

The address from the disbelievers wasn't directed solely towards the prophets. Instead, it also targeted those who had come to believe in the teachings of these prophets, particularly individuals who had previously adhered to the disbelievers' way of life. This message underscored a demand for both the prophets and their new followers to revert to the disbelievers' faith and practices. While 'returning' hints at retracing steps to a former state, emphasizing the past affiliations of the new believers, the essence of this demand was not a simple invitation to return. Rather, it exuded an underlying tone of dominance, showcasing the disbelievers' intent to assert control and superiority."[1]

A linguistic subtlety in the verse is the use of the letters "*lām*" and "*nūn*" for emphasis in both parts: "*Surely we will expel you...*" and "*or you shall revert...*" The forced return of the believers, as mandated by the disbelievers, is equivalent to a repeated action, making the phrase "*or else you shall revert ...*" repetitive. It resonates as: "By God, we will either expel you from our lands, or compel you to revert to our creed."[2]

The statement, "*Thereat their Lord revealed to them: 'We will surely destroy the wrongdoers and surely We will settle you in the land after them'*" indicates the use of pronouns (their, you and them). The first and second pronouns refer to the prophets, while the third is directed towards the disbelievers, as deduced from the context. The term "wrongdoers" is used to signify the cause of their impending destruction, emphasizing that their oppressive actions warranted such a fate. Associating judgment with a characteristic emphasizes its importance. Similarly, when He says, "*This* (*promise*) *is for someone who is awed to stand before Me* (*or fears my*

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or shift from one state to another. Here, the implication is that the messengers, if they heed the threat of the disbelievers, wouldn't just be reverting to a previous belief system. They would be transitioning or shifting into the disbelievers' way of life and belief system, which might be different from any previous state they had been in.

1 Editor's note: This highlights the collective nature of the address, taking into account the diverse backgrounds of the believers and their spiritual journeys.

2 Editor's note: With the inclusion of the letters *lām* and *nūn*, the sentence emphasizes the two definitive choices laid out by the disbelievers: 1) Expulsion from the land, or 2) Reverting to their old beliefs. This construction serves to emphasize the gravity and ultimatum nature of the disbelievers' demand.

*station*) *and fears My threat,*" it accentuates the elevated level of fear as a condition for being settled or granted refuge.

The term *maqami* (to stand before Me in awe or to fear My station) is a *mim*-derived noun (*maṣdar mīmī*) signifying God's authority and control over all matters. It could also mean the "place" or "station" signifying God's omnipresence over all affairs. By "His threat" (*waʿīd*), it refers to the warnings and punishments promised to those who defy His commands.

Thus, 'fearing His station' indicates reverence for Him as the God who oversees the affairs of His servants. 'Fearing His threat' signifies reverence for Him as the God who, through His prophets and messengers, warned His servants against defying His commands. In either case, it all comes down to piety (*taqwa*) and aligns with the statement of Moses to his people: "*Turn to Allah for help and be patient. The earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favor of the Godwary*" (al-A'rāf:128), as highlighted in *al-Kashshāf*.

The meaning is: The Lord of the messengers revealed to them—the special lordship attribute was given to them due to their reliance which brings mercy and care—and swore, "We will certainly destroy these oppressors who threaten you, and we will certainly settle you in this land from which they threatened to expel you, and we will make you inherit it due to your fear of Me and My threat." In this manner, God grants inheritance of the land to His pious servants.

وَاسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ﴿١٥﴾

(14:15) And they prayed for victory (against the infidels), and every obstinate tyrant was defeated.

The term "sought victory" (*istaftaḥū*) refers to seeking triumph and divine support.

"Disappointment" (*khaybah*) signifies a loss of hope, defeat, and destruction. "Obstinate" (*ʿanīd*) describes one who is stubborn or defiant, and from it comes the term *muʿānid* which means one who opposes.

The pronoun "they" in "And they prayed for victory (*wa istaftaḥū*)" refers to the messengers, meaning they sought victory from God when all means seemed to be cut off from them, and when they reached the peak of oppression by the oppressors and denial by the defiant. This is reminiscent

of Prophet Noah's plea as related by God: "*I have been overcome, so help me*" (al-Qamar:10). The pronoun can also refer to both the messengers and the disbelievers collectively. The disbelievers too were persistent in demanding the messengers to bring forth decisive proof, as in their statements, "When will this promise be fulfilled? (*matā hādhā al-fath*)" and "When will this promise come to pass? (*matā hādhā al-waʿd*)." By this interpretation, the meaning becomes: both the messengers and the disbelievers sought victory (*istaftaḥū*), but the powerful tyrants faced disappointment (*khaybah*), which signifies severe punishment.

مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيدٍ ﴿١٦﴾ يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِيغُهُ
وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ ﴿١٧﴾

(14:16-17) with hell lying ahead of him, (where) he shall be given to drink of a purulent fluid, gulping it down, but hardly swallowing it: death will assail him from every side, but he will not die, and there is (yet) a harsh punishment ahead of him.

"Purulent" (*ṣadīd*) refers to the liquid pus that oozes from a wound, and it serves as a description of the water given to the dwellers of Hell.

"To gulp down" (*tajraʿ*) means to consume a drink sip by sip continuously. "Forcing down" (*al-isāghah*) denotes pouring a drink down the throat. It's said: "He forced down the drink" (*sāgh al-sharāb*), and "I forced it down" (*asghatuhu*) as mentioned in *al-Mujam*. The rest of the verse is evident.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ
عَاصِفٍ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَى شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٨﴾

(14:18) A parable of those who defy their Lord: their deeds are like ashes over which the wind blows hard on a tempestuous day: they have no power over anything they have earned. That is extreme error.

A "tempestuous day" (*yawm ʿāṣif*) with strong winds is used metaphorically to represent the deeds of the disbelievers in terms of the consequences befalling them. It illustrates that their deeds are in vain, bearing no impact towards achieving happiness or salvation. This is akin to another

verse where God says, "*Then We shall attend to the works they have done and then turn them into scattered dust*" (al-Furqān:23). Their deeds are like particles of ash that the wind forcefully scatters on a turbulent day, leaving behind nothing. This is the likeness of their deeds.

From this, it's evident that there's no need to estimate or extrapolate anything from the statement or relate it to similar phrases like "The example of the deeds of those who disbelieved is..." etc. It appears that this verse is not a continuation of Prophet Moses's speech but rather a conclusion or result derived from the conveyed message.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, through its chain of transmission, it is reported from Muʿāwiya b. Wahb who narrated from Imām al-Ṣādiq who said: "Whoever is granted gratitude is given increase. God, the Mighty and Majestic, says: '*If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you* (*in blessing*).'"

(2) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-Īmān* have narrated from Abī Zuhair Yaḥyā b. ʿAṭārīd b. Muṣʿab from his father, who said that the Messenger of God stated: No one is given four things and deprived of four other: Whoever is given gratitude is not deprived of increase because God says, "*If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you* (*in blessing*);" whoever is given supplication is not deprived of the response because God says, "*Invoke Me, I will respond to you*;" whoever is given seeking forgiveness is not deprived of forgiveness because God says, "*Seek forgiveness from your Lord; He is indeed very Forgiving*;" and whoever is given repentance is not deprived of its acceptance because God says, "*It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants*" (al-Shūrā:25).

(3) In the same source, Abū Naʿīm in *al-Ḥilya* narrates via Mālik b. Anas from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn. When Sufyān al-Thawrī said to him, "I will not leave until you narrate to me," Jaʿfar replied: "I will narrate to you, but frequent narrations are not beneficial for you, O Sufyān. When God blesses you with a favor and you desire its continuation and permanence, increase your praise and gratitude for it. God, the Most High, said in His

book: '*If you are grateful, I will surely increase you* (*in favor*).' And when sustenance is delayed, increase in seeking forgiveness, as God, the Most High, stated in His book: '*Seek forgiveness from your Lord; indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver—He will send* (*rain from*) *the sky upon you in* (*continuing*) *showers and give you increase in wealth and children; He will provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.*' O Sufyān, when you are distressed by a matter from a ruler or another, frequently recite 'There is no power or strength except through God,' for it is the key to relief and a treasure from the treasures of paradise."

**Author's comment:** Numerous narrations on this subject are found in the sources of both sects.

(4) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated with its chain from 'Umar b. Yazīd who said: I heard Imām al-Ṣādiq say: "The gratitude for every blessing, no matter how great, is to praise God." In it, with its chain from Ḥammād b. 'Uthmān, he said: Imām al-Ṣādiq left the mosque and his mount was lost. He said, "If God returns it to me, I will surely thank Him as He deserves." It wasn't long before it was brought to him, and he said, "Praise be to God." Someone then asked him, "May I be sacrificed for you, did you not say that you would surely thank God as He deserves?" Imām al-Ṣādiq responded, "Did you not hear me say: 'Praise be to God?'"

(5) In it, with its chain from Abū Baṣīr, he asked Imām al-Ṣādiq : "Is there a limit to gratitude that, when a servant reaches, he becomes truly grateful?" He replied, "Yes." I asked, "*What is it?*" He said, "Praising God for every blessing upon him in family and wealth, and if he has an obligation in the wealth God has blessed him with, he fulfills it. From it is His statement, the Almighty: '*Glory be to Him who has subjugated this to us, for we could not have subdued it on our own,*' and from it is His statement: '*He settled me in a blessed dwelling and You are the best to settle,*' and His statement: '*Lord, admit me with a truthful entry, and bring me out with a truthful exit, and grant me a supporting authority from You.*'"

(6) In the *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, from Abū Wallād, he said: I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq, "Do you see this apparent blessing upon us from God? If we thank Him for it and praise Him, will He increase us as God

has said in His book: '*If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you* (*in blessing*)?'" He replied, "Yes, whoever praises God for His blessings, thanks Him, and knows that it's from Him and not from someone else, God will increase his blessing."

**Author's comment:** The last two narrations explain gratitude in the best manner. It aligns with what we have previously explained in this exposition that gratitude is to manifest the blessing through belief, speech, and action. This is supported by God's statement, "*And as for the blessings of your Lord, speak out*" (al-Duha:11).

(7) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is reported that my father Abū Rafʿah related from the Prophet: "Whoever harms his neighbor in the hope of acquiring his dwelling, God will inherit his home." This is in line with His statement: "*And the disbelievers said to their messengers... till His words... Your Lord inspired them: 'I will surely destroy the wrongdoers, and I will surely make you dwell in the land after them.'*"

(8) In both *Tafsīr Majma' al-bayyān* and *Tafsīr Ruh al-maʿānī*, from the Prophet who said: "Whoever harms his neighbor, God will inherit his home."

(9) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn al-Daraysh reported from Abī Mujlaz who said: A man said to ʿAlī b. Abi Talib, "I am the most related of people." ʿAlī replied, "You do not relate people." The man insisted, "Indeed, I do." ʿAlī then asked him, "Have you considered His statement, the Almighty: '*And ʿĀd and Thamūd and the inhabitants of the Rass and many generations in between?*'" The man responded, "I am related to that 'many.'" ʿAlī continued, "Have you pondered His words: '*Has not the story reached you of those who were before you, the people of Noah, ʿĀd, and Thamūd, and those after them? None knows them except Allah.*'" The man fell silent.

(10) In *Majma' al-bayyān*, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: "*al-Sadid is the blood and pus from the private parts of the adulterers in the Fire.*"

**Author's comment:** This is a vivid description of the severe punishment awaiting those who commit grave sins.

(11) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, reports have been narrated by Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, regarding the description of Hell, as well as by Abū Yaʿlā, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir,

Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Hilyah*, which have been authenticated, and by Ibn Mardawayh and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Baʿth wa al-Nashūr*. These reports are from Abū Umāmah who narrated from the Prophet regarding the verse, "*and they will be given a drink of boiling water to gulp.*" The Prophet said: When it is brought close to him, he despises it. As it approaches, it scorches his face and makes his scalp peel off. When he drinks it, it will sever his intestines until it exits from his rear. God, the Exalted, says: "*So they will be given to drink boiling water that will cut up their intestines.*" And He says, "*And if they seek relief, they will be relieved with water like molten copper that scalds the faces.*"

(12) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is stated that the Messenger of God said regarding the verse (above): "When it is brought close to him, he despises it. As it approaches, it scorches his face and his scalp peels off. When he drinks it, his intestines are severed and ripped under his feet. Indeed, something like a valley of pus and filth will flow out from some of them."

(13) From the same source, another narration from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqīr, who said that *ʿAnīd* (in verse 14:15) refers to the obstinate person who turns away from the truth.

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## Verses 19-34

The verses encompass reminders to people, frequently addressing them through the Prophet with phrases like, "*Have you not regarded* (*or seen*) *that Allah created the heavens and the earth with justice,*" "*Have you not regarded how Allah has drawn a parable,*" and "*Have you not regarded those who have exchanged Allah's blessing for unfaith*."

In these verses, the Almighty underscores that creation is built on truth. Accordingly, all will manifest their true nature. Those who walk in truth, believe in it, and act upon it will attain happiness and Paradise. Conversely, those who follow falsehood, worship Satan, and obey arrogant tyrants will experience inevitable suffering. Their misled followers, both among the jinn and humans, will disassociate themselves from them. To God belongs all glory and praise.

The text then elaborates that this division into two groups occurs due to the divergence in their paths: one follows guidance, while the other follows misguidance. The one bound by guidance is the believer, and the one bound by misguidance is the wrongdoer. The ultimate arbiter in this is God, the Exalted, who does as He wills. To Him belong all glory and praise.

Lastly, the verses recall past communities that were destroyed due to their ingratitude towards the blessings of God, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy. The text reproaches human beings for their injustice and denial of divine blessings that fill existence. Even if one tries to count these blessings, they could never enumerate them.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ
بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

> (14:19-20) Have you not regarded (or seen) that Allah created the heavens and the earth with justice? If He wishes, He will take you away, and bring about a new creation, and that is not a formidable thing for Allah.

In this verse, the term *ru'yah* (seeing) refers to decisive knowledge rather than visual perception. This is more fitting in context, given that the

verse discusses the manner in which the heavens and the earth were created.

An action is considered "true" (*ḥaqq*) if it serves a purpose for its doer, directing towards a meaningful end. Each type of creation has its purpose from the moment of its inception. Some creations are means to an end for others, as in the symbiotic relationship between earthly elements and plants, or plants and animals. As the Qur'an states, "*We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them for play,*" (al-Dukhān:38) and "*We did not create the sky and the earth and whatever is between them in vain. That is a conjecture of the faithless*" (Ṣād:27).

Creation continually evolves, moves through stages and reaches objectives until it returns to the ultimate end: As He mentions, "*that the terminus is toward your Lord*" (al-Najm:42).

In summary, an action is "true" when it serves a purpose and aims towards a goal. If an action is aimless, it is "false" (*bāṭil*). A seemingly organized but pointless action is termed "play," as children engage in organized games and activities that serve no ultimate goal.

In divine action, there is a constant adherence to the truth. The creation of the heavens and the earth sets in motion a world that remains even after its initial phase. If this were not the case, it would be pointless, leaving no lasting impact. The intricate order observed in the universe would merely be a "game" devoid of higher purpose.

In light of the above, the letter "*bā*" in "with justice"[1] (*bi al-ḥaqq* ) indicates companionship or association. Therefore, the interpretation by some that the "*bā*" indicates causality or means—as in, He created them by His truthful word or for a truthful purpose—is not appropriate.

"***If He wishes, He will take you away, and bring about a new creation, and that is not a formidable thing for Allah:***" The notion of this being 'hard' or 'difficult' is irrelevant for God. This divine message is addressed to all of humanity, utilizing the Prophet as a paradigmatic example. This contextual focus on the Prophet is evident from the verses that precede and follow this statement, specifically the phrases "*Have you not seen*" and "*and that is.*"

It has already been stated that creation "with justice" necessitates that God Himself is Omnipotent and Self-Sufficient. Otherwise, if the creation

1 This also translated as "in Truth" (Ed.)

we witness—so intricately organized—were mere "play," it would signify some internal necessity on His part, such as relieving stress or seeking entertainment. God's inherent Self-Sufficiency precludes such possibilities.

Perhaps this subtlety is what necessitated the follow-up after "*Indeed, Allah created the heavens and the earth*" with "*If He wishes, He will take you away*," etc. Meaning, do you not realize that God's creation of this world reveals His Power and Self-Sufficiency? He has the authority to replace you, and this would not be difficult for Him. God is the Most Powerful, possessing the most beautiful names, and all glory and majesty belong to Him.

This demonstrates that the explicit word "*Allah*" is mentioned to serve as an evidence, emphasizing that it is not difficult for Him precisely because He is God, Glorious is His name.

If one argues that the phrase "*If He wishes*" suffices to indicate His absolute Self-Sufficiency and that He is not engaged in play, then it would be more suitable to restrict it to "*If He wishes, He will take you away*" and exclude "*and bring about a new creation.*" The cessation of the old and the inception of the new do not negate the possibility of "play."

However, when it is said "*If He wishes, He will take you away*," and the discourse is directed at humanity in general or specifically at the followers of the Prophet, it becomes necessary to follow it up with "*and bring about a new creation.*" For the observed creation, with its interconnected and dependent parts, only serves its purpose through this specific combination and organization. Without humans, the current state of the heavens and the earth would be meaningless and considered "play" from another aspect.

In other words, the removal of humans alone, while keeping the rest of the observable creation intact, would be futile and aimless play. Similarly, eliminating creation without a subsequent goal is also aimless. True justice, revealing God's Self-Sufficiency, is to replace one people with another, as indicated by the noble verse. Understand this.[1]

وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا

1 Editor's Note: This explanation highlights the intrinsic link between humanity and the cosmos. Human existence imparts meaning to the universe, and any alteration without divine intent disrupts this harmony, underscoring the profound wisdom in God's creations.

فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُغْنُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَجَزِعْنَا أَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحِيصٍ ﴿٢١﴾

(14:21) Together they will be presented (*barazū*) before Allah. Then those who were weak will say to the arrogant (leaders), 'Indeed we were your followers. So will you avail us against Allah's punishment in any wise?' They will say, 'Had Allah guided us, surely we would have guided you. It is the same to us whether we are restless or patient: there is no escape for us.'

The term *barūz* means to come out or to emerge, derived from *al-barāz* with a *fatha* on the *bā*, which refers to an open space. It is said *baraz ilayhi* when one emerges in such a way that there is no barrier to shield him from view. This concept is also seen in *mubārazah* and *al-barāz*, like when a fighter emerges from the ranks to face his counterpart from the enemy.

The term *taba'* with two vowels indicates the plural of *tāb'* which means follower, similar *khadam* is plural for *khādim* (servant). Some say it's a collective noun, others infer it's a hyperbole. *Ighna* implies giving benefit (or assistance), it also encompasses the idea of repelling or pushing away. The terms *jaz'a* (despair) and *sabr* (patience) are opposites. *Mahis* is derived from the verb *hasa* which means to avoid something distasteful. Hence, *mahis* signifies a place or state where one avoids adversity or hardship.

The phrase, "*Together they will be presented before Allah,*" means they will manifest in His presence, with no barrier concealing them from Him. This is from their perspective, as in the worldly life they presumed that their Lord was hidden from them and they were absent from Him. But on the Day of Judgment, all illusory veils will vanish, and they'll realize that there's no barrier between them and God. However, for God, nothing is hidden from Him, either in this world or the hereafter. As stated in the verse: "*Nothing is indeed hidden from Allah in the earth or in the sky*" (Āl 'Imrān:5).

This statement can also be interpreted as a reflection of their being held accountable for their deeds and the divine will being executed, finalizing their promised recompense. This is similar to the verse, "*Soon We shall make Ourselves unoccupied for you, O you notable two!*" (al-Raḥmān:31).

Regarding "*Then those who were weak will say to the arrogant* (*leaders*),

'*Indeed we were your followers. So will you avail us against Allah's punishment in any wise?,*'" this depicts a conversation between the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment. The "weak" are individuals who followed and obeyed the influential disbelievers during their lives. Meanwhile, the "arrogant" refers to these powerful figures, who actively dissuaded belief in God and denied His signs. (The exchange reveals the desperate appeal of the weak, seeking reprieve from divine punishment through those they once followed.)

The essence is that the weak followers will say to the arrogant, "In the worldly life, we were your followers, obeying you without questioning your directives. Can you now assist us today, protecting us from the torment of God that's decreed for us?"

From this, the term "*min*" in *min adhāb Allah* (against God's punishment) is for clarification, whereas in *min shay* (any wise) it serves to emphasize, like when we say, "No one came to me at all." Negation and interrogation are closely related in meaning. There's no evidence to suggest that a clarifying statement can't precede what's being clarified, especially when they're linked without separation.

Their saying, "*Had Allah guided us, surely we would have guided you,*" implies that if they had received guidance, they would have also guided their followers. This can either mean guidance away from the torment or guidance to the true faith in the world. Regardless, the outcome remains the same given the parallels between this life and the hereafter. As illustrated (by the inhabitants of paradise) in the verse: "*They will say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, who guided us to this. We would have never been guided had not Allah guided us. Our Lord's apostles had certainly brought the truth*'" (al-A'rāf:43).[1]

The phrase, "*It is the same for us whether we despair or are patient; there is no escape for us,*" signifies that despair and patience are equivalent for the speakers. In Arabic, the term *sawā* refers to equality or equivalency, serving as the predicate for an omitted subject, and the interrogative phrase serves to clarify this point. The phrase, "*there is no escape for us*," serves as another clarification for this equality. The implication is that the two conditions—despair and patience—are equal for us and in our regard; there

1 That is, intertwining both forms of guidance. (Ed.)

is no escape from the inevitable punishment.

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

(14:22) When the matter is all over, Satan will say, 'Indeed Allah made you a promise that was true and I (too) made you a promise, but I failed you. I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me. So do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot respond to your distress calls, neither can you respond to my distress calls. Indeed I disavow your taking me for (Allah's) partner aforetime. There is indeed a painful punishment for the wrongdoers.'

In *Majma' al-bayyān*, it is mentioned that the term *al-Iṣrākh al-Ighāthah* refers to a collective cry for help, responding to the one who cries out. The expression "someone cried out to me, so I responded to him" in Arabic is conveyed as *Istasrakhani Fulan fa Asrakhtuhu*, meaning that someone sought my help, and I came to his aid.

This is a comprehensive statement that Satan will make on the Day of Judgment to the wrongdoers. In this statement, he clarifies his position with respect to them and informs the assembled people about the true nature of the relationship that existed between him and them in the worldly life. God the Exalted has promised that He will inform them on the Day of Judgment about the matters over which they had been in disagreement. On that Day, the truth will be manifest for all; any obscurity or confusion that had previously existed will be cleared. The angels will disavow their association with polytheism, while the jinn and devilish companions will disown and expel them. The idols and gods they took as lords besides God will reject their polytheism. Even their leaders and misguided scholars will not respond to them. The wrongdoers themselves will confess their misguidance and wrongdoing. All these events are mentioned in numerous *verses*, and they are not hidden from anyone who reflects upon them

thoughtfully.

Although *Shaytan* (the Satan) can refer to any evil entity from both jinn and humans, as in His saying: "*That is how for every prophet We appointed as enemy the devils from among humans and jinn*" (al-An'ām:112), the reference in this verse is specifically to the Shaytan who is the source of all temptation and misguidance among the children of Adam, which is Iblīs. The context clearly indicates that he addresses all the wrongdoers, confessing that he had called them to polytheism. The Qur'an explicitly states that Iblīs is responsible for this, as he proclaimed: "*He said, 'By Your might, I will surely pervert them, except Your exclusive servants among them. ...* until (the verse) *...I will surely fill hell with you and all those who follow you*" (Ṣād:82-85).

As for his progeny and tribe mentioned in the Qur'an, "*Indeed, he and his tribe see you from where you do not see them. We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe*" (al-A'rāf:27) and "*Will you then take him and his offspring for guardians?*" (al-Kahf:50), their influence might be over certain individuals or certain acts. However, the primary entity responsible for misguidance and temptation is Iblīs.[1]

The one proclaiming, "*Indeed Allah made you a promise that was true...*" is Iblīs. Through these words, he aims to shift the blame for sinful actions onto them and disassociate himself from their polytheism. His statement: "*Indeed Allah made you a promise that was true and I* (*too*) *made you a promise, but I failed you,*" means that God's promise, which encompasses resurrection, gathering, accountability, judgments, paradise, and hell, was true and evident. But his promise, which denied resurrection, accountability, paradise, and hell, was false and unfulfilled.[2] This explanation is in line with that provided by exegetes.

Based on this understanding, everything related to the Hereafter, whether affirming or denying it, has been confirmed by God, the Exalted, and denied by Iblīs. The breach of promise implies the manifestation of falsehood and the non-occurrence of what is implied, as well as the

1 Editor's Note: This explanation implies that while they act as collaborators, the primary instigator of misguidance and transgression remains Iblīs.

2 Editor's note: In other words, Iblīs diverted his followers from these realities even though he seems to acknowledge resurrection, accountability, etc.

intention of what is essential.[1]

It's possible, and indeed likely, that the promise encompasses the consequences of faith and polytheism in both this world and the Hereafter, as they are intertwined. God has promised believers a good life and a joyful existence, while those who associate partners with Him and turn away from His remembrance are promised a life of hardship, distress in their hearts, and torment in their souls in this world. Additionally, everyone is promised (the realities of) resurrection, judgment, paradise, and hellfire in the Hereafter.

Iblīs promised his followers enticing desires and prolonged hopes, making them forget about death and diverting their attention from resurrection and judgment. He instilled in them the fear of poverty, humiliation, and the blame of others. At the core of all this was his tactic to make them oblivious of their Lord's position, presenting the immediate causes in their lives as independent influencers and creators of their effects. He portrayed their souls as self-sufficient, dominating over all other causes, and managing them as they wished. This illusion led them to rely on themselves instead of God, harnessing these causes in pursuit of their hopes and wishes.

In summary, God promised them concerning matters of this world and the Hereafter, fulfilling what He guaranteed. On the other hand, Iblīs lured them through negligence and adornment towards illusions and wishful thinking. These fall between what humans can never attain and what, when attained, is found different from what they perceived. This leads them to chase after what they assume is as they desire in this world. As for the Hereafter, he makes them forgetful of its affairs, as previously mentioned.

Iblīs' statement, "*I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me*"—the term "authority" (*sulṭān*) as mentioned by al-Rāghib, refers to "dominance" (*salāṭah*) or the capability to overpower. The term is also used to describe a compelling argument because of its ability to convincingly influence minds towards certain conclusions. Often, the term "one with authority" (*dhū al-sulṭān*) is used in reference

1 Editor's Note: In other words, everything about the afterlife, whether it's being confirmed or denied, is vouched for by God and rejected by Iblīs. When a promise is broken, it reveals dishonesty and the failure to fulfill what was promised, indicating the main intent behind it.

to a ruler or someone similar.

The apparent meaning suggests that what is intended here is broader than just physical or metaphorical authority. The implication is, "In this world, I had no dominion over you, neither over your very beings or possessions to compel you to disobey God by taking away your free will and imposing my desires upon you, nor over your intellects to establish a convincing argument for polytheism as I wished, thereby forcing your minds to accept it and your souls to obey whatever it commands."

It also seems evident that the exception in His saying, "*except that I called you,*" is discontinuous. The meaning is: However, I called you without any authority, and you responded to me. His invitation of people towards polytheism and sin was with God's permission, but it was not a form of domination. Because calling someone to do something does not establish control of the caller over the one being called, even if there is a kind of control over the nature of the invitation itself. An evidence for this is His saying: "'*Instigate whomever of them you can with your voice...* until *...but as for My servants, you shall have no authority over them.' Your Lord suffices as trustee*" (al-Isrā':65).

From here, it becomes clear that al-Rāzī's interpretation, which claims that the exception is continuous, falls apart. He said: The power to compel a human towards something sometimes comes from force by the compeller and sometimes by strengthening the caller's presence in the heart. This is done by whispering into it. This is a kind of domination. As if he said: I had no control over you except through these whispers, not through any physical means.

The flaw in this argument is that the mere act of calling someone doesn't naturally equate to domination or overwhelming control over the one being called. Counting this as a form of control is inadmissible.

Yes, a kind of psychological inclination might arise from the one being called, leading him to heed the call. The caller, with his invitation, may have control over himself, but it is self-imposed control by the invitee, not control imposed by the caller. In other words, it is a power that the invitee possesses within himself, which the caller then taps into; it's not that the caller inherently possesses this power over him. Satan denies having the sort of control he possesses over himself, not what they impose upon themselves by obeying. This is evident in his saying, "*So do not blame me,*

*but blame yourselves.*"

This is the kind of control that God confirms for him in His saying: "*Indeed he does not have any authority over those who have faith and put their trust in their Lord. His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner* (*of Allah*)" (al-Naḥl:100). Or His saying: "*Indeed, as for My servants you do not have any authority over them, except the perverse who follow you*" (al-Ḥijr:42). As you can see, these verses make it clear that his power is conditional upon following, befriending, and associating partners with God, not the other way around.

Due to his lack of absolute control over them, it leads to his subsequent statement: "*So do not blame me, but blame yourselves.*" The word "*So*" is for specification. That is, if I had no power over you in any form—as indicated by the definite article's negation and emphasis in his saying, "I had no authority over you"—then none of the blame that befalls you due to polytheism and sinning returns to me. Therefore, you have no right to blame me. Instead, you ought to blame yourselves because you have control over your actions.

And his saying, "*I cannot respond to your distress calls, neither can you respond to my distress calls*," means I cannot be your savior or protector, nor can you be mine. Hence, today, neither am I an intercessor for you, nor are you intercessors for me.

Regarding his statement, "*Indeed I disavow your taking me for* (*Allah's*) *partner aforetime,*" it means, "I have distanced myself from your association of partners with God in the world." The intended meaning of association here is associating in obedience, not associating in worship, as is evident from the saying of the Most High addressing the congregation: "*Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, Do not worship Satan. He is indeed your manifest enemy. Worship Me. That is a straight path*?" (Ya-Sin:60-61). This statement from him is a disavowal of their association, just as the Sublime described the disavowal of every follower of falsehood from their leader on the Day of Judgment. This demonstrates that their association of partners with Him in the world was nothing but an illusory mirage. The Almighty said: "*on the Day of Resurrection they will forswear your polytheism*" (al-Fāṭir:14). And He said: "*and when the followers will say, 'Had there been another turn for us, we would disown them as they disown us now.' Thus shall Allah show them their deeds as regrets for*

*themselves, and they shall not leave the Fire*'" (al-Baqarah:167). And also: "*Those against whom the word had become due will say, 'Our Lord! These are the ones whom we have perverted. We perverted them as we were perverse ourselves. We repudiate them before You: it was not us that they worshipped.' It will be said, 'Invoke your partners!' So they will invoke them, but they will not respond to them, and they will sight the punishment, wishing they had followed guidance*" (al-Qaṣaṣ:63-64).

His statement, "*There is indeed a painful punishment for the wrongdoers,*" as a continuation of Iblīs' statement in the context, indicates that the wrongdoers will be recorded for painful punishment because they committed wrong, which will only revert to themselves.

The apparent context indicates that his saying, "*I cannot respond to your distress calls, neither can you respond to my distress calls,*" alludes to the severance of the bond between him and his followers. This is indicated in other places, such as His saying: "*Certainly all links between you have been cut, and what you used to claim has forsaken you!*" (al-An'ām:94). And His saying: "*Then We shall set them apart from one another, and their partners will say, 'It was not us that you worshipped.'*" (Yunus:28).

This implies that if it wasn't an allegory, then his saying, "*neither can you respond to my,*" would be redundant, for there's no purpose attached to it. Neither do they assume that they are capable of aiding Iblīs and interceding for him, nor does he assume such. He says, "*So do not blame me, but blame yourselves,*" for the bond is severed between us. It doesn't benefit you that you followed me, nor does it benefit me that you were my followers. I disassociate from your association, so I am not a partner to the Most High. I disassociated because you were wrongdoers in your essence, and the wrongdoers shall have a painful punishment. On that day, there will be no justification to protect and approach them.

In this context, as you can see, the followers of Iblīs will blame him on the Day of Judgment for the misfortune that has befallen them due to their allegiance to him. They will expect him to share in their suffering in some way. However, he will respond to them by saying that there is no binding connection between him and them. Therefore, their blame should only be directed at themselves. He will not be able to approach or touch them, as he fears the painful punishment prepared for the wrongdoers, and they themselves are wrongdoers. This is closely related to the verse of the

Almighty, "(*The hypocrites are*) *like Satan when he tells man to disbelieve, but when he disbelieves, he says, 'I am absolved of you. Indeed I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds*'" (al-Ḥashr:16).

Some have said that when he says, "*Indeed I disavow your taking me for* (*Allah's*) *partner aforetime*," the disavowal refers to his actions in this world. The phrase "*aforetime*" could relate only to his saying, "*Indeed I disavow*," or it may also relate to his saying, "*your taking me for* (*Allah's*) *partner*." This is a matter of interpretation.

Overall, the main point of the verse is that individuals are responsible for their own actions, as they have the authority over themselves and no one else. Therefore, one should only blame oneself. The perceived connection between the follower and the followed is illusory and holds no real weight. This reality will become clear on the Day of Judgment when Satan disavows his followers and redirects their blame back onto themselves. This parallels the previous verse, which shows that the connection between the weak and the arrogant is also illusory and will be of no use when it is needed on the Day of Judgment, when the truth is revealed.

Various exegetes offer diverse opinions on the details of the verse, which we have chosen not to delve into here. Those interested in further exploration can refer to the extensive exegesis.

The verse also clearly indicates that individuals have control over their own actions, which binds them to the consequences and removes the blame from others. However, the verse does not provide any evidence that this control is absolute. We have discussed this issue in the first part of the book under the commentary for the verse, "*and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors*" (al-Baqarah:26).

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

(14:23) Those who have faith and do righteous deeds will be admitted into gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them (forever), by the leave of their Lord. Their greeting therein will be 'Peace!'

The Almighty says: "*Those who have faith and do righteous deeds will be admitted into gardens...*," which describes the ultimate state of the

fortunate believers. In the saying, "*Their greeting therein will be 'Peace!'*," it contrasts their condition of reciprocal peace and blessed greeting with the state of others mentioned in the preceding two verses, who will be engaged in disputes, disavowal, and despair.

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾ تُؤْتِي أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(14:24-25) Have you not regarded how Allah has drawn a parable? A good word is like a good tree: its roots are steady and its branches are in the sky. It gives its fruit every season by the leave of its Lord. Allah draws these parables for mankind so that they may take admonition.

There are various interpretations concerning the term "word" (*kalimah*). Some say that "*word*" here serves as a substitution for "parable" (*mathal*) and that "like a good tree" (*ka shajarat-in tayyibah*) acts as an adjective or even a predicate to the missing subject, which would be inferred as, "it is like a good tree." Alternatively, it is said that "*word*" is the delayed first object of "has drawn" (*ḍaraba*) and "*parable*" is the advanced second object. This arrangement prevents any misunderstanding that might separate "*word*" from its description, which is "*like a good tree*," and the sentence could be understood as "God has drawn a good word like a good tree, etc., as a parable." Both interpretations aim to delve into the intricate relationship between "*word*" and "*like a good tree*," attempting to understand how these elements interact within the verse.

It has been said that the verb "to strike" (*ḍaraba*) governs a single object and that "word" (*kalimah*) is in the accusative case due to an implied verb such as "made" (*ja'ala*) or "took" (*ittakhadha*). The interpretation would be, "God has drawn a parable, making a good word like a good tree," etc. I believe this is the best explanation if "good word" etc., is understood as an explicative conjunction for the phrase "God has drawn a parable." In that case, "word" would be in the accusative due to an implied verb like "made" or "took." This interpretation signifies that the comparison is between the word and the tree, or in other words, the word is likened to the tree, which is what we mean when we say, "took a good word to be

like a good tree," etc.

As for the phrase "*its root is steady*," it means that the tree is grounded in the earth, extending its roots deep within it. In the phrase "*and its branches are in the sky*," this signifies that what branches off from this root extends upward, covering and shading the sky. The phrase "*It gives its fruit every season by the leave of its Lord*" means that it bears its consumable fruit at all times by the permission of God. This summarizes the blessings that such a tree can offer.

Regarding the verse, there have been differences of opinion:

Concerning the intended meaning of the "good word" (*kalimah ṭayyibah*):

Some said it refers to the testimony of "There is no deity but God."

Others believed it denotes faith (*īmān*).

Some asserted it's the Qur'an itself.

Some said it represents the general acts of glorification and sanctification.

Another opinion is that it's the general praise of God.

Yet others opined it's any good word.

Some said it encompasses all acts of obedience.

And there are those who said it refers to the believer (*mu'min*).

Concerning the meaning of the "good tree" (*shajarah ṭayyibah*):

The majority opinion is that it's the date palm.

Some believed it's the coconut tree.

Others said it's any tree that bears good fruit, such as figs, grapes, and pomegranates.

Another perspective is a tree possessing the characteristics that God described, even if it might not physically exist.

Additionally, there were differences regarding the meaning of "at every instance" (*kull ḥīn*):

Some said it means two months.

Others said it represents six months.

Some believed it signifies a complete year.

Some thought it means every morning and evening.

Yet others interpreted it as all times.

Engaging in such disputes can distract one from the true essence, which is seeking the knowledge of the Book of God and understanding

the objectives of the noble verses and their purposes.

Upon reflecting on the verses, the interpretation is that the "good word" likened to a "good tree" in terms of its qualities, refers to the firm and true belief. As the Almighty says, which seems to be a conclusion derived from this simile: "*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word, in the life of this world and in the Hereafter*" (14:27). And the "word" here refers to the utterance (*qawl*), not just as a mere phrase but as one that is based on a firm belief and resolution, upon which a person remains steadfast and does not deviate in action.

God has alluded to something similar in other parts of His speech, such as: "*Those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then remain steadfast, they will have no fear, nor will they grieve*" (al-Aḥqāf:13), and "*Indeed those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah!' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them,* (*saying:*) '*Do not fear, nor be grieved!*" (Fussilat:30), and "*To Him ascends the good word, and He elevates the righteous deed*" (al-Fāṭir:10).

This "utterance" (*qawl*) and "good word" (*kalimah ṭayyibah* ) upon which God promises to keep its people steadfast in this world and the Hereafter, are those who believed. It is then juxtaposed against the misguidance of the wrongdoers and in another context against the polytheists. This indicates that the intended simile is the word of monotheism and the testimony that there is no deity but God in its true essence.

The declaration of monotheism and remaining steadfast upon it is the true word, having a firm root, preserved from all changes, decay, and falsehood. This root is either the name of the exalted God or the essence of realities. From it sprout subsidiary true beliefs, pure morals, and righteous deeds with which the believer enlivens his wholesome life and constructs the human world in its truest form. These align with the universal system which led to the emergence of humans, naturally inclined towards true belief and righteous actions.

The pinnacle among the believers are those who said, "Our Lord is *Allah*" and then remained steadfast. By embodying this firm word and good utterance, they resemble a tree firmly rooted, with humanity continuously benefiting from their existence and blessings.

Similarly, every true word and every righteous deed follows this analogy, having a stable root, wise branches, and beneficial fruits.

The simile mentioned in the verse applies universally, as supported

by the reference to a "good word" in indefinite form. However, what the context of the verse emphasizes is the foundation of monotheism, from which all other true beliefs branch out, upon which pure morals grow, and from which righteous deeds arise.[1]

Finally, God, the Exalted, concludes the verse by saying: "*Allah draws these parables for mankind so that they may take admonition,*" so that those who reflect may remember that there's no salvation for one seeking happiness except in realizing the word of monotheism and remaining steadfast upon it.

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

**(14:26) And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree: uprooted from the ground, it has no stability.**

As defined in al-Rāghib's *al-Mufradāt*: "The term *al-ijtithāth* denotes uprooting or extraction. When one says *jathahu* or *ijtathahu*, it implies that something has been uprooted or extracted. The word *al-jath*, when vocalized with a *ḍammah*, describes an elevation from the ground, akin to a mound or hillock. The term *jathah* for an entity signifies its prominent or protruding aspect."

al-Rāghib continues: "The term '*bad word*' (*al-kalimah al-khabīthah*) stands in contrast to the '*good word*' (*al-kalimah al-ṭayyibah*). Because of this, there's a divergence of views about its exact nature. Each group has articulated a definition that aligns with their description of the 'good word'. Likewise, there's a debate regarding the intended meaning of the 'bad tree' (*al-shajarāh al-khabīthah*). Some identify it as the colocynth, while others describe it as *al-kashūth*—a plant that winds around thorns and trees, lacking grounded roots and devoid of leaves. Others believe it's akin to a garlic tree, or a thorny tree, moss, truffle, or any tree that doesn't yield palatable fruit."

1 Editor's note: In other words, the "true word" serves as a foundational principle, anchoring both spiritual and moral life. The tree metaphor illustrates the virtues emanating from a core belief in monotheism, showing its essential role as the root of all other virtues and its alignment with a universal ethical and cosmological order.

You are familiar with these differences from the preceding verse. You also understand what reflection gives in the meaning of the "*good word*" and what it's exemplified by. Accordingly, the opposite holds true for the "*bad word*" and what it's represented by, letter by letter. It is indeed the word of polytheism represented by a corrupt tree, assumed to be uprooted from the earth's surface, without any firm root, and having no stability. Being corrupt, its only effects are harm and evil.

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٢٧﴾

(14:27) Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter, and Allah leads astray the wrongdoers, and Allah does whatever He wishes.

Apparently, "with a firm word" (*bil-qawli*) is linked with "*Allah fortifies*" and not with "those who have faith." The preposition "*bi*" (with) implies instrumentality or causality, not transitivity. Moreover, the phrase "*in the life of this world and in the Hereafter*" also seems to relate to "*Allah fortifies*" and not to "*a firm word*."

This means that when the faithful remain steadfast in their belief and are upright, God will fortify them in both this world and the Hereafter. Had God not fortified them, their steadfastness would have been of no avail, and they would have gained nothing from its benefits. All matters ultimately return to Him. In this context of guidance, God's saying "*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word*" is parallel to His saying, "*So when they swerved* (*from the right path*)*, Allah made their hearts swerve*" (al-Ṣaff:5), in the context of misguidance.

However, there is a distinction between the two. Guidance begins with God, and subsequently, the servant is guided. On the other hand, misguidance begins with the servant's poor choices, and then God recompenses him with further misguidance. This is illustrated by the verse, "*and He does not lead astray thereby any but the transgressors*" (al-Baqarah: 26). Numerous Qur'anic verses state that guidance comes solely from God.

To clarify, God, the Exalted, created human beings with an innate disposition towards understanding His lordship and inspired them with both their immorality and piety. This is the initial, innate guidance, which

is then reinforced by the religious call carried out by His prophets and messengers.

If a person adheres to this innate disposition and yearns for knowledge and good deeds, God guides them. Hence, their guidance to faith is a result of God's initial guidance. Conversely, if a person deviates from this innate path due to poor choices and ignorance of his Lord's status, and instead becomes engrossed in worldly matters and follows desires, this is a self-induced misguidance not preceded by divine misguidance.

Therefore, the context differs in the two verses. In the verse, "*So when they swerved* (*from the right path*)*, Allah made their hearts swerve,*" deviation is assumed to come first from the people, followed by divine deviation. However, in "*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word*," the emphasis is on the steadfastness of their faith, which necessitates divine guidance and their own guidance. Their good choices are then fortified by God, protecting them from deviations in this world and the Hereafter.

It is said that this fortification is akin to a tree's firm roots in the ground. If the tree is well-rooted, it grows, branches out, and bears fruit. In this case, the "life of this world and in the Hereafter" corresponds to "at all times," as both this world and the Hereafter encompass all times.

Others say that the meaning is that God fortifies the faithful and honors them with His grace and reward through the "firm word," which is the word of faith. This is because it is established with proofs and evidences. The aim of fortifying them is to bring them closer to Him and to grant them Paradise.

Another interpretation suggests that the meaning is that God fortifies them by granting them power and victory in this world and a place in Paradise in the Hereafter. However, this seems far-fetched in the given context.

The phrase "and God leads astray the wrongdoers" (*wa-yuḍillu Allahu aẓ-ẓālimīn*) explicitly suggests, when considered in juxtaposition to "*those who have faith*" in the preceding sentence, that the wrongdoers referred to here are the disbelievers in God and His signs. However, God elaborates on who the wrongdoers are in His own words elsewhere, saying: "*May Allah's curse be on the wrongdoers! Those who bar* (*others*) *from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked, and disbelieve in the Hereafter*" (al-A'rāf:44-45).

This statement can be viewed as a conclusion derived from the second

parable mentioned: "*And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree, uprooted from the earth, having no stability*." The implication is that God misguides the disbelievers by depriving them of the path of guidance. As a result, they neither attain a fulfilling life in this world nor everlasting blessings and divine satisfaction in the Hereafter. What surfaces upon the unveiling of their hearts are nothing but doubt, indecision, anxiety, confusion, sorrow, regret, and remorse.

Regarding the phrase "and God does whatever He wishes" (*wa yafʿalu Allahu mā yashāʾ*), it means that the guidance of some and the misguidance of others proceed as God's will dictates. There is neither a barrier nor a deterrent to His will and action.

From all this, it becomes evident that God has willed the guidance of some and the misguidance of others; He is certainly the doer of both. This reflects the predetermined destiny— the happiness of the believer and the misery of the disbeliever— as narrated in the traditions.

The occurrence of the Divine Name in phrases such as "*wa yuḍillu Allahu*" (and God leads astray) and "*wa yafʿalu Allahu*" (and God does) accentuates the gravity and awe of the situation, as has been said.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ ﴿٢٨﴾

(14:28) Have you not regarded those who have exchanged Allah's blessing for ingratitude, and landed their people in the abode of ruin?

*Majmaʾ al-bayyān* says: "*iḥlāl* refers to placing something in its proper place, either by proximity if it is a tangible object or by induction if it is an intangible attribute. The term *bawār* signifies destruction. The expression *bāra al-shayʾ yabūr* means something is annihilated, and a *rajul būr* implies a doomed man, and *qawm būr* likewise."

al-Rāghib says: "*Bawār* refers to extreme decay, which leads to corruption. As it is said, decay leads to corruption. Therefore, *bawār* is used metaphorically for destruction, as the phrase *tijāratun lan tabūr* (a trade that will never fail) indicates."

The verse reflects the state of the leaders of disbelief and the chiefs of misguidance in their oppression and ingratitude toward God's grace, which envelops them from all sides. Instead of being thankful and believing in their Lord, they choose to be ungrateful. It was previously discussed

how God created the heavens and the earth out of His richness, which is a grace. Then, the Word of Truth to which He invites and its wholesome, enduring impacts are also graces.

This verse is general and is not specifically referring to the disbelievers of Mecca or the Quraysh, even though it is addressed to the Prophet. The concluding phrase (in verse 14:30), "*Say, 'Enjoy* (*for a while*)*, for indeed your destination is hellfire!,'*" serves to emphasize that restricting the scope of the verse isn't necessary. Its generalization extends to the tyrants among the nations and what they have done to their people.

Therefore, the phrase " *Have you not regarded those who have exchanged Allah's blessing for ingratitude*" refers to the leaders of disbelief and the chiefs of misguidance among past nations and within this Ummah as well. The specification for this general reference is found in the phrase "*and landed their people in the abode of ruin*" because they have persuasive authority and are obeyed within their communities; thus, they are the leaders and chiefs.

By exchanging God's grace for disbelief, they have replaced the gratitude that was obligatory upon them with ingratitude. An implicit component of the phrase could be understood as "they exchanged the obligatory gratitude for God's grace with disbelief." Alternatively, the meaning could be that they directly replaced the grace itself with disbelief. A verse that parallels this concept is found in Sūrah al-Waqi'ah: "*And make your denial of it your vocation?*" (Verse 82).

Mentioning their act of leading their people to the "abode of ruin" implies that they too will end up there, as they are the leaders of misguidance who have gone astray and then led others astray. Another verse that mirrors this meaning is found in Sūrah Hūd: "*he will lead his people and conduct them into the Fire: an evil goal for the incoming!*" (Hūd:98).

The meaning, therefore, is: have you not seen the leaders and chiefs among the previous nations and from your community who have replaced gratitude for God's grace with disbelief? Their people followed them, so both they and their people will end up in the abode of destruction, which is misery and Hellfire.

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٢٩﴾

(14:29)—hell, which they shall enter, and it is an evil abode!

This verse serves as an explanation for the "abode of ruin." There is also a possibility that "Hell" is in the accusative case due to the absence of a subject, meaning "they will reach Hell, they will burn in it." This clause stands on its own without a preceding reason, because the accusative case is likely and there is no context that requires its independence.

From this, it becomes clear that the view claiming these verses to be Medinian and referring specifically to the leaders of Mecca and the nobles of Quraysh—those who rallied against the Prophet and fought him in Badr, where they were killed and led their people to the abode of destruction—is flawed. You understand from the meaning of the verse that it is general and there is no justification to limit it to those disbelievers killed in Badr. Rather, the verse encompasses every leader of misguidance who has led his people to the abode of destruction, regardless of those who came before or after. What is meant by "leading to the abode of destruction" is their sealing in the misery of Hell, even if they have not yet been killed, died, or entered Hell.

Furthermore, the subsequent verse: "*They have set up equals to Allah...*, suggests that the plural pronoun ("they") refers back to those disbelievers mentioned in this verse. Therefore, the address "*Say, 'Enjoy (for a while)*'" applies to those remaining among them—those who accepted Islam on the day of the conquest. This reiterates an absolute, final misery for them without exception.

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ ﴿٣٠﴾

(14:30) They have set up equals to Allah, to lead (people) astray from His way. Say, 'Enjoy (for a while), for indeed your destination is hellfire!'

The term *al-andād*, which is the plural form of *nad*, means "equivalent" or "comparable." In this verse, it alludes to the deities that were revered alongside God, encompassing angels, jinn, and humans.

They have declared these beings as equivalents to God, despite their admission that these entities are created by God. They labeled them as gods and lords and attributed to them the governance of worldly affairs, then worshipped them out of fear and hope. All of this, while the matter

of creation and command belongs solely to God. Their own innate nature acknowledges this, and God has supported it with signs and evidences given through His prophets and messengers to attest His oneness.

They were not unaware or mistaken about the principle of *Tawḥīd* (monotheism); rather, they deliberately took these *andād* (equals) seeking worldly gains, subjugating people, and diverting them from the path of God. This is why their taking of *andād* (equals) is justified by the phrase "*to lead* (*people*) *astray from His way*." The Prophet was then commanded to warn them of the Fire, which is their ultimate abode, by saying, "*Say,* '*Enjoy* (*for a while*)*, for indeed your destination is hellfire!*'"

It would be conventional in speech to tell them, "You have taken rivals (to God) or have gone astray from God's path, so your destiny is to the fire." Yet, instead of merely saying "enjoy (for a while)," the phrasing was articulated to clearly highlight their hidden corrupt motives, making their exposure more pronounced.

قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلَالٌ ﴿٣١﴾

(14:31) Tell My servants who have faith to maintain the prayer and to spend out of what We have provided them with, secretly and openly, before there comes a day on which there will be neither any bargaining nor friendship.

When God threatened them through His Messenger with the punishment of the Day of Judgment for misleading people from the path of God, He commanded His faithful servants to adhere to His path before the arrival of the Day of Judgment. On that Day, they will not have the opportunity to make up for their lost happiness through worldly means. These worldly means are either material exchanges or love and friendship (*khilāl*), neither of which will have any impact on the Day exclusively set for reckoning and retribution.

From this, it becomes evident that "*to maintain the prayer and to spend*" is an elucidation of God's path. These two pillars encompass all the prescribed religious duties that rectify the worldly life of human beings, in their relationship with their Lord and with each other.

The phrase "*to the maintain the prayer and to spend*" and so forth are

in the subjunctive mood due to being the response to a command. There's an implied statement: "Say: perform the prayer and give charity," etc.

The point of contention here is that the subjunctive mood in a response to a command should naturally follow that command. Yet, the command to pray and give charity does not necessarily mean that it will be obeyed, but because the command is directed to His believing servants, obedience is expected without any issue.

The spending (*infāq*) mentioned in the verse is general charity in the path of God, as the Sūrah was revealed in Mecca before the revelation of the verses about obligatory alms (*zakāt*). The purpose of spending secretly or openly is to do so as deemed appropriate by the standards of religious etiquette.

It is not contradictory to the verse "*On that day, friends will be one another's enemies, except for the Godwary*" (al-Zukhrūf:67). The relationship between the two verses is one of general to specific. Every form of friendship that is not based on piety will cease to exist on the Day of Judgment. However, the friendship that is for the sake of God will remain and benefit.

The verse negates all forms of *khilāl* (befriending) but then establishes some form, similar to how intercession is negated in the verse "*...there comes a day on which there will be no bargaining, neither friendship, nor intercession*" (al-Baqarah:254), and then affirmed with the permission of God as in "*...except those who are witness to the truth and who know* (*for whom to intercede*)" (al-Zukhrūf:86).

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ
مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ وَسَخَّرَ
لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَآتَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ
اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

(14:32-34) It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth, and He sends down water from the sky and with it He brings forth crops for your sustenance. And He disposed the ships for you(r benefit) so that they may sail at sea by His command, and He

> disposed the rivers for you. He disposed the sun and the moon for you, constant (in their courses), and He disposed the night and the day, and He gave you from all that you had asked Him. If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them. Indeed man is most unfair and ungrateful!

When God addressed their act of associating partners with Him, leading people away from His path and issued a subsequent warning, the subsequent three verses accentuates God's exclusive sovereignty. This divine dominion is evident in the meticulous orchestration of creation, the descent of rain, the provision of sustenance, and His dominion over seas, ships, rivers, the sun, moon, day, and night.

Towards the end of these verses, it's emphasized that such numerous and invaluable blessings, and many others not specifically mentioned, are manifestations of God's graciousness to humanity. The narrative of this chapter, as previously alluded to, unfolds under the guiding attributes of God being the Mighty and the Praiseworthy."

His statement, "*Allah is the One who created...,*" is akin to our assertion: He alone is the Lord, distinct from those you have set up as His equals.

In the next statement, "*and He sends down water from the sky and with it He brings forth...*," the term "sky" refers to what is above, which is its linguistic meaning. The water descending from it refers to the rain that falls from it. This water on Earth sustains life, nourishing both plants and animals.

The verse, "*And He disposed the ships for you*(*r benefit*) *so that they may sail at sea by His command, and He disposed the rivers for you*," implies that the subjection of ships for humans is such that they serve their various needs, including the conveyance of themselves and their goods, without sinking or becoming immobile.

Some argue that God's subjection of these entities entails endowing humans with the ability to build and use them, but this seems unlikely. The apparent meaning of subjection in this context is making them useful for human purposes, rather than inspiring humans on how to use them.

In conventional expression, it would have been stated: "And He subjected for you the sea so that ships may sail by His command and subjected for you the rivers." However, the expression is inverted to emphasize the blessings bestowed through ships, although these are not confined to

maritime blessings alone. This is likely done to enumerate the blessings, as ships are more apparent blessings, while the sea holds greater ones.

Attributing the sailing of ships to His divine command, despite being based on natural laws like wind and vapor, underscores that everything ultimately returns to His encompassing will.[1]

Furthermore, "*And He disposed the rivers for you*" refers to flowing waters across various regions of the Earth. Their subjection serves human needs for drinking, cleaning, and other uses, and supports the life of plants and animals.

Regarding: *He disposed the sun and the moon for you, constant* (*in their courses*)*, and He disposed the night and the day*, al-Raghib delves into the term *dā'ibīn*, which is translated as "constant." He clarifies that the root word, *dāb*, signifies an ongoing course of action. Within the context of the verse, *dā'ibīn* conveys the idea of a never-ending or perpetual state. To further illustrate this, al-Raghib refers to another Qur'anic phrase, *kadāb āl Fir'awn*[2] (like the way of the people of Pharaoh), emphasizing that *dāb* alludes to a consistent, unchanging condition or habit.[3]

The next verse highlights: "*and He gave you all that you had asked Him. If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them. Indeed man is most unfair and ungrateful!*" The term "asking" is differentiated from "requesting." Asking implies a conscious demand and is specific to rational beings, while requesting is more general. People are prompted to ask out of a compelling need, pushing them to alleviate that need. The typical medium for this is spoken language, although one could also communicate needs through gestures or written text. Such forms of communication are all categorized under genuine asking.

God, in His majesty, is the One who fulfils the needs of all who are in need. Nothing is associated with His essence in terms of what He needs

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1 Editor's note: While humans harness the power of wind and steam to propel ships, it's God who set these systems into motion. By this understanding, He is the ultimate cause, and every other cause is contingent upon His divine will.

2 Qur'an, 3:11 (Ed.)

3 Editor's note: This explanation highlights the meticulous order and unwavering patterns set forth by God in both the celestial realm and human behaviors. The celestial bodies, with their dependable movements, serve as symbols of God's unwavering order and design in the universe.

for His existence and sustenance, except through the extension of His generosity and kindness. This is the case whether people acknowledge it or deny it. God is more knowledgeable about the apparent and hidden needs of people, and everyone turns to His divine bounty, asking Him to meet their various needs—regardless of whether He grants or withholds, and whether He answers all or some of their prayers.

This is the rightful nature of asking, specific only to God and not extending to anyone else. Regarding spoken asking, sometimes people verbally ask God, and sometimes they verbally ask others. However, God is the ultimate destination of genuine asking, as everything turns to Him in this true sense. Some among the believers also engage in verbal asking towards Him.

As for "giving," it is stated broadly, without limitation or exception. This indicates that for every request, there is a corresponding act of giving on His part. This reinforces the idea that the verse is addressing mankind in general terms, as further corroborated by the concluding statement, "*Indeed man is most unfair and ungrateful.*"

In summary, every type of human need or request—whether met in full or in part—is addressed by God's infinite generosity. This is true even though individual humans might sometimes ask and not have their needs fulfilled.[1]

This notion is corroborated by the divine verse: "*I answer the supplicant's call when he calls upon Me*" (al-Baqarah:186). In the exegesis of this verse, it has been explained that the Almighty does not reject the prayers of those who call upon Him. The only exceptions are when the prayer is not sincere or when it's not the supplicant's own prayer but that of someone else. It is true that sometimes an individual may experience a disconnect between their heart and their tongue, or may err in the wording of their supplications. However, the human species, by its nature, do not recognize idle talk or hypocrisy and acknowledges no Lord other than God. When faced with a need, it sincerely turns to God and only to God for help. Consequently, all its supplications are answered, its inquiries are fulfilled,

1 Editor's note: This concept underscores the notion that every form of sustenance or provision one receives is a manifestation of God's boundless generosity. It doesn't matter if one's request is directed towards another being or entity; in the grand scheme of things, it is God who fulfills every need.

and its needs are met.

The preceding analysis clarifies that the particle "*min*" ("from" or "of") in the phrase "*from all that you had asked Him*" serves an initiatory purpose. It suggests that what God grants is drawn from what has been asked—this could be the entirety of the requests in some instances, or only a portion in others. If the term "from" were used in a divisive sense, it would imply that God grants only a part of what is requested in every supplication. This, however, is not the case.

Similarly, if the verse were worded as, "He gave you all that you have asked Him," it would convey the granting of all requests, which isn't the actual scenario. On the other hand, if it were phrased as, "of what you have asked Him," this would imply that it is possible that some supplications may go unanswered or some queries may be entirely rejected. Yet, given that this verse emphasizes gratitude, such an interpretation would be incongruous.

In summary, the verse conveys that God Almighty has bestowed upon humanity all that they have asked for. There isn't a single need among their various needs that He hasn't addressed, whether in full or in part, in alignment with His profound wisdom.

Some might interpret the phrase "and He gave you from all that you asked Him" to encompass both the explicitly expressed requests and the unspoken ones. This presupposes that the "asking" mentioned in the verse pertains solely to verbal requests. Yet, this interpretation has been previously challenged, and the verse's broader context doesn't bolster such a reading.

Regarding the words, "*If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them,*" al-Rāghib says: The term "enumeration" (*al-iḥṣā*) involves counting numerically. This term derives from the word for pebbles (*ḥaṣā,*). This connection can be traced back to the ancient practice where pebbles served as counting tools, akin to how we employ our fingers in the present day.

In summary, the text suggests that the blessings bestowed by God transcend the scope of human calculation. It is inherently impossible for humans to enumerate the myriad needs that God has fulfilled through His blessings.

And how can one possibly count the blessings of the Almighty when

the entire universe, in all its parts, along with its various attributes and states, is intricately interconnected? Each aspect is beneficial to another, and they are all interdependent. In this context, everything is a blessing in relation to the whole, a reality that eludes any attempt at comprehensive enumeration.

This may clarify why the term "blessing" is used in its singular form in the phrase "*blessing of Allah*." In truth, the single term is enough to imply abundance. The use of "blessing" (in singular) here captures the essence of the One who bestows these blessings, serving the same function as the plural form would.

The statement, "*Indeed, man is most unfair and ungrateful,*" implies that humans frequently display ingratitude, thereby wronging themselves. This lack of gratitude for God's blessings leads them towards ruin and loss. Alternatively, the verse could mean that humans commit a great deal of injustice towards the blessings of God by neither acknowledging nor appreciating them. The sentence serves as an explanatory recapitulation, reinforcing what can be deduced from the previous discussion. Anyone who reflects on the aforementioned discourse about the blessings of the Almighty, and all that He has granted humans in response to their requests, will undoubtedly conclude that humans, who are generally oblivious to these blessings, are essentially unjust to themselves and ungrateful for the blessings of their Lord.[1]

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, al-Bazzār, Abū Ya'lā, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Ḥākim (who authenticated it), and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Anas, who said: The Messenger of God was brought a piece of Basri cloth. He then said: "*a good word is like a good tree*" until he reached, "*It gives its fruit every season by the leave of its Lord.*" He added,

1 Editor's note: To complement the author's discussion, the verse emphasizes the incalculable nature of God's blessings, illustrating their interconnectedness in the universal order. The use of "blessing" in singular form conveys its boundless essence, while the statement about human ingratitude serves as a sobering reminder of the frequent failure to recognize these divine gifts, leading to spiritual and moral detriment.

This refers to the date palm. And, "*a bad word is like a bad tree*" until he reached, "*it has no stability*." He then said, "This refers to the colocynth (or bitter apple tree)."

**Author's comment:** The notion that the "good tree" refers to the date palm is narrated in several traditions from him (the Messenger). This only underscores the appropriateness of the simile. However, the continuation of this narration contradicts the following one.

(2) In the same source, another narration by Ibn Mardawayh from Abū Hurayrah states: Some companions of the Messenger of God were sitting and discussing this verse: "*uprooted from the ground; it has no stability.*" They asked, "O Messenger of God, we think this refers to desert truffle." The Messenger of God responded: "Desert Truffle is a bounty and its water is a cure for the eyes; the ʿAjwa date is from Paradise and is a cure for poison."

**Author's comment:** The discussion here involves the colocynth (bitter apple tree), which indeed has significant medicinal properties.

(3) In it, al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan* reported from ʿAlī who said: The term *Hayn* (every season) is six months."

**Author's comment:** The comment on this narration is similar to the previous one.

(4) In *al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, from ʿAmr b. Ḥurayth, who said: I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, "*like a good tree, its roots are steady and its branches are in the sky.*" He replied, "The Messenger of God is its root, Amīr al-Mu'minīn is its branch, and the Imāms from their offspring are its twigs. The knowledge of the Imāms is its fruit, and their believing followers are its leaves. Is there any virtue in this?" I said, "No, by God." He added, "By God, when a believer is born, a leaf sprouts because of him, and when a believer dies, a leaf falls off."

**Author's comment:** This narration is based on the understanding that the "good word" refers to the Prophet. The term has been used in the Qur'ān in reference to a human (being), as in the verse: "*A Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary*" (Āl ʿImrān:45). Nonetheless, this narration is about application of the term, and the variations in narrations about its application support this. In some accounts, the root is the Messenger of God, the branch is ʿAlī, the twigs are the Imāms, the fruit is

their knowledge, and the leaves are the Shīʿa, as in this narration. In others, the tree is the Messenger of God, its branch is ʿAlī, its twig is Fāṭimah, its fruit is her children, and its leaves are our Shīʿa, as narrated by Al-Ṣadūq from Jābir from Imām al-Bāqir. In yet others, the Prophet and the Imāms represent the stable root, and the branch represents the guardianship for those who embrace it, as mentioned in Al-Kāfī, through its chain from Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(5) In *Majma' al-bayyān,* Abū al-Jārūd narrated from Imām al-Bāqir regarding the verse, "*...bad tree.*" He said: This is an allegory for the Umayyads.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, from ʿAbdul Raḥmān b. Sālim al-Ashal from his father from Imām al-Ṣādiq: "*A good word like a good tree.*" He said: This is an allegory for the Ahl al-Bayt, and for those who oppose them, it is "*And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree: uprooted from the ground, it has no stability.*"

**Author's comment:** al-Ālūsī mentioned in *Tafsīr Rūh al-Ma'ānī*, and I quote: "The Imāmīs, and you know their stance, have narrated from Imām al-Bāqir an interpretation that the '*bad tree*' refers to the Umayyads, and the '*good tree*' refers to the Messenger of God, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, and their descendants. However, some Sunni traditions contest the application of the '*bad tree*' being the Umayyads. For instance, Ibn Marduwayh quoted ʿAdī b. Ḥātim who stated: 'The Messenger of God said: "Indeed, God examined the hearts of His servants, finding the best of them to be the Arabs. Among the Arabs, the finest were the Quraysh. They are the 'blessed tree' God mentioned in His Book, '*A good word is like a good tree*,' since the Umayyads are from the Quraysh.'"

It's intriguing that just because a community or group is considered blessed due to their nature, it doesn't necessarily mean that all the branches emanating from it are similarly blessed. The tradition, even if we accept it at face value, only implies that the Quraysh is a blessed tree. But what about all the people who branched from it being equally blessed? Take, for example, Banū ʿAbd al-Dār or individuals like Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab; there is certainly no definitive evidence. What correlation exists between a tree being inherently blessed and some of its branches, which have grown in a corrupt manner, also being blessed?

In the same context, Ibn Marduwayh narrated from ʿĀ'ishah, who said

to Marwān b. al-Ḥakam: I heard the Messenger of God say to your father and grandfather: "You are the accursed tree in the Qur'an."

Scholars like al-Ṭabarī and others have narrated from Sahl b. Saʿd, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar, Yaʿlā b. Murrah, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, and Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib: "*We did not appoint the vision that We showed you except as a tribulation for the people and the tree cursed in the Qur'an*,"[1] refers to them. Saʿd's wording tells of the Messenger of God being displeased when he saw certain individuals climbing his pulpit like monkeys, and God revealed: "*We did not appoint the vision that We showed you except as a tribulation for the people and the tree cursed in the Qur'an*."

There will also come a tradition from ʿUmar and ʿAlī explaining the verse: "*hose who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude*" to refer to the most sinful of the Quraysh, specifically Banū al-Mughīrah and Banū Umayyah.

(7) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is reported from Safwān ibn Mihrān regarding Imām al-Ṣādiq who said: "Satan intends to approach a man from our supporters at the time of his death. He tries to approach him from his right and his left in order to divert him from his belief. However, God refuses to let that happen and thus He says, '*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter.*'"

(8) In the same source, from Zurārah, Ḥamrān, and Muḥammad b. Muslim from Imāms al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq: When a person is laid in his grave, two angels approach him—one from the right and one from the left—while Satan stands in front of him with eyes made of copper. The person is asked about his belief in the Messenger of God. If he's a believer, he'll affirm it, and he will be told to sleep without any worries. His grave will expand and he will see his place in Paradise. This is related to the verse, "*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter.*" If he is a disbeliever, they will ask, and he will say, "I do not know," after which Satan will take over.

(9) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is reported from al-Tayālisī, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Jarīr,

1 Qur'an, 17:60 (Ed.)

Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh, on the authority of al-Barā' ibn ʿĀzib, that the Messenger of God said: "When a Muslim is questioned in his grave, he testifies that there is no deity but *Allah*, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. This is in reference to God's statement, '*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter.*'"

(10) In the same source, it is mentioned that al-Ṭabarānī in "al-Awsaṭ" and Ibn Mardawayh reported on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, who said, "I heard the Messenger of God comment on this verse, '*Allah fortifies those who have faith with a firm word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter*.' He stated: 'In the Hereafter' refers to the grave."

**Author's comment:** Many narrations from both Shī'ah and Sunnī sources detail the questioning in the grave, the arrival of the angels Munkar and Nakīr, the steadfastness of the believer and the confusion of the disbeliever. Many of these narrations refer to and uphold the aforementioned verse.

The apparent meaning suggests that the "*Hereafter*" referred to (in the verse) is the grave and the realm of death. This understanding may be based on the evident meaning of "making firm." The notion of being granted firmness inherently suggests a situation where there is a possibility of faltering or stumbling. This is conceivable in situations other than the Day of Resurrection, where only deeds are recompensed. However, when considering that every steadfast being owes its stability to God, be it in a transitory state or otherwise, there is no distinction between the intermediary state (*Barzakh*) and the Day of Resurrection in terms of a believer being made firm by the grace of God. It is preferable to interpret the narrations as a form of application.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Al-Aṣbagh ibn Nabātah who said: Amīr al-Mu'minīn commented on the verse, "*Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude?*" He said: "We are the favor of God with which He blessed His servants."

**Author's comment:** This is a matter of flow and applicability of the verse.

(12) And from *Ma'sim al-Musrif*, narrated from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, regarding the verse, '*And led their people into the abode of ruin*,' it refers to the wicked among the Quraysh, Banū Umayyah and Banū Makhzūmī.

**Author's comment:** This is also narrated in Al-Burhān, from Ibn Shahr Āshūb, who narrates from Abī al-Tufail, who quotes ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

(13) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, narrations from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Ṭabrānī have been reported from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib concerning the verse, '*Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude*' stating that it refers to the wicked among the Quraysh, Banī Umayyah and Banū Makhzūmī.

**Author's comment:** And it is narrated from ʿUmar as follows:

(14) In this regard, al-Bukhārī reported in his history, as did Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh, from ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb regarding the verse, '*Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude*,' he said: 'These are the wicked among the Quraysh, Banū al-Mughīrah and Banū Umayyah. As for Banū al-Mughīrah, you have dealt with them on the Day of Badr; as for Banū Umayyah, they have been given respite for a while.'

(15) In it, Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās, who said to ʿUmar: "O Commander of the Believers, this verse, '*those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude*,' refers to the wicked among the Quraysh, my maternal uncles and your paternal uncles. As for my maternal uncles, God eradicated them on the Day of Badr; as for your paternal uncles, God has deferred their reckoning for a time."

(16) In al-ʿAyāshī's exegesis, Dhurayḥ narrated from Imām al-Ṣādiq, 'I heard him say: Ibn al-Kawā' came to Amīr al-Mu'minīn and asked him about the verse, "*Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude*," he said: 'That is Quraysh. They exchanged the grace of God for disbelief and belied His Prophet on the Day of Badr.'

**Author's comment:** The difference in application of the verse in his

speech is evidence that this is from the perspective of explaining the general applicability of the verse, not the reason for its revelation.

(17) In *al-Kāfī*, from Imām al-Ṣādiq from some of his companions who narrated: "Alī b. al-Ḥusayn when reciting the verse, '*If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them*,' would say: 'Glory be to the One Who has placed in no one any understanding of His favors, except the understanding of falling short in recognizing them. Just as He has not placed in anyone the ability to comprehend Him more than the knowledge that they cannot comprehend Him. So, the thankfulness of those who know Him is their acknowledgment of their inadequacy in thanking Him. He has made their acknowledgment of their inadequacy a form of thanksgiving, just as He has taught the scholars of the worlds that they cannot comprehend Him, so He made that knowledge.'"[1]

almizan.org

1 Editor's note: The narration emphasizes the boundless magnitude and incomprehensibility of God and His favors. No one can fully grasp the entirety of God's blessings; the most they can understand is their own inability to do so. Similarly, no one can truly comprehend God; the most they can realize is their own limitation in understanding Him. This acknowledgment of human limitation and inadequacy becomes an act of gratitude and thanksgiving to God, as recognizing our limitations leads us closer to the divine truth.

## Verses 35-41

The verses include a second reminder of a series of God's blessings, following the first reminder contained in His saying: "*And* (*recall*) *When Moses said to his people, 'Remember Allah's blessing upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's clan*'" (14:6). Firstly, God mentions His favor upon a group of His believing servants, who are the Children of Israel, descendants of Abraham. Then, He mentions a second favor upon another group among them, who are the Children of Ishmael, also descendants of Abraham. This second favor is encapsulated in the supplication of Abraham, "*My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary...*" (al-Baqarah:126), and extends to the end of his supplication.

Within these blessings is God's divine guidance enabling them to avoid idol worship, the blessing of security in Mecca, drawing the hearts of people towards its residents, and providing them with sustenance in the form of fruits and other means. All of this is because God, the Almighty, is the Most Powerful, the Most Praiseworthy.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ
الْأَصْنَامَ ﴿٣٥﴾ رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي
وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

(14:35-36) When Abraham said, 'My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary, and save me and my children from worshiping idols. My Lord! Indeed they have misled many people. So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me, and as for those who disobey me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful.'

The phrase "*My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary*" recalls the moment Abraham uttered this prayer, emphasizing Mecca's distinction, which God has honored.

God has recounted a similar prayer from Abraham in another context, stating: "*And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this a secure town, and provide its people with fruits—such of them as have faith in Allah and the*

*Last Day,' He said, 'As for him who is faithless, I will provide for him* (*too*) *for a short time, then I will shove him toward the punishment of the Fire and it is an evil destination.'"* (al-Baqarah:126).

From the variation in expressions—namely, "*make this a secure town*" and "*make this city a sanctuary*"—it can be inferred that these are two separate supplications made by Abraham at different times. After settling his son Ishmael and his mother in the land of Mecca and returning to Palestine, he came back to find the tribe of Jurhum drawn to residing near them. Pleased with this development, he prayed at that time, specifying their location: "*My Lord, make this a secure town.*" In this prayer, he asked his Lord to transform the area into a town, which it wasn't at that time, and to provide its believing inhabitants with fruits. Later, upon returning to them again, he found that the place had become a town, and thus he prayed to his Lord to make the town secure.

Supporting the notion that these are two separate prayers is the difference found in them beyond this perspective. In the verse from al-Baqarah, the supplication is for the inhabitants of the city to be provided with fruits, whereas in the discussed verses, the plea is specifically for his offspring, along with other matters he prayed for them.

On this basis, the prayer recounted about Abraham in these verses is the last of what God, the Exalted, has mentioned in His Book regarding the words and prayers of Abraham. He offered this prayer after settling Ishmael and his mother in the area, after the Jurhum tribe came to live alongside them, after constructing the Sacred House, and after the town of Mecca was built by its residents, as indicated by the verses' content.

Assuming that the recounted ones are a single prayer, when he said: "*My Lord! Make...*" it can be interpreted as "*My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary*." One verse omits the referred part, while the other has the described part, for brevity.

What Abraham sought in terms of safety is legislative security, not natural or inherent, as previously mentioned in the interpretation of the verse from al-Baqarah. He's asking His Lord to decree Mecca as a sacred and safe land. Contrary to what one might assume, this is among the greatest blessings God has bestowed upon His servants. If we contemplate this divine decree, which Abraham instituted with His Lord's permission, namely the rulings of sanctity and safety, and deeply consider people's

reverence for this Ancient House and the surrounding safe sanctuary of God, we find that it has been rooted in their hearts for four thousand years up to the present day. This has brought countless religious and worldly blessings and grace, not just to its inhabitants, but also to all who hold it dear and whose hearts are attached to it. History has recorded much of this, and what it hasn't is even more. Making Mecca a safe city is among the magnificent blessings God has bestowed upon His servants.

"***And save me and my children from worshiping idols. My Lord! Indeed, they have led astray many among the people...***" The terms *janubuhu* and *ajnabahu* mean to distance or keep away. His request that God distance and protect him and his sons from idol worship is a plea and a refuge in God from the misguidance attributed to these idols, as he said: "*My Lord! Indeed, they have led astray...*" and so on.

It is well-understood that any form of distancing and avoidance from God, regardless of its nature, is an act and influence from Him upon His servant. However, it's not in a manner that leads to coercion or compulsion, and it doesn't entail forcing or obligating someone in a way that would deprive them of their free will. Such distancing holds no virtue to be sought by someone like Abraham, the friend of God.

This indeed circles back to what was mentioned in the verse: "*Allah fortifies those who have faith with the firm word*." Every act of goodness or abstention is first attributed to God, and then to the servant. Contrarily, every act of evil or abstention is initially credited to the servant. Even if attributed to God, it's done so only in the context of retribution. This has been previously clarified.

The avoidance from idol worship is truly realized through the diversion from God, a mercy from Him towards His servant, and care. In reality, it is nothing but a matter which the servant is cloaked with. However, he only possesses it through the empowerment of God, the Exalted. Hence, He inherently owns it, while the servant possesses it through His command and permission. Just as the servant is guided only through the guidance of God, there is only one guidance. However, it is owned by God, the Exalted, inherently, and the servant only possesses it through His empowerment. The most succinct expression in this regard is found in the narrations of the *Ahl al-'Iṣmah* (the Infallibles) that God facilitates for His servant to perform good deeds and abstain from evil.

To summarize, what is intended by his saying *wajnubnī* (and save me) is to request from God, the Exalted, the act of the servant abstaining from idol worship. In other words, he is asking his Lord to protect him and his progeny from idol worship and guide them to the truth if they present themselves for it. He also prays that blessings be bestowed upon them if they seek it, not just to protect them from it, whether they present themselves for it or not. He also seeks blessings upon them whether they seek it or not. This is the essence of his supplication.

From this, we can infer that while the supplication might be phrased to cover everyone, it specifically benefits a select group. This group consists of those who are receptive to it, leaving out the stubborn and arrogant among them. Additional details will follow.

Then, he (Abraham) supplicates with this prayer for himself and his descendants, saying: *wajnubnī wa baniyya an na'budal-aṣnām* (and save me and my children from worshiping idols). His descendants refer to all those who come from his lineage after him, which includes the progeny of Ishmael and the progeny of Isaac. Just as the term "son" can refer directly to a child without any intermediary, it can also refer indirectly. This is corroborated by the Qur'an where it states: *millata abīkum Ibrāhīm* (the faith of your father, Abraham)—(al-Hajj: 78). The term "Bani Isrā'īl" (Children of Israel) is used to refer to the Jews in forty-two places in the divine revelation.

He (Abraham) seeks distance from idol worship for himself and all his subsequent descendants, as previously explained. However, some might argue that the context and discourse indicate that the supplication is specifically for the family of Ishmael residing in Hijaz, and not necessarily inclusive of the progeny of Isaac.[1]

Following his supplication, "*and save me and my children from worshiping idols*," he remarks: "*My Lord! Indeed, they have led astray many among the people*." This serves as a rationale for his prayer. The invocation "My Lord" is reiterated to invoke Divine mercy. It implies: I beseech You to distance me and my descendants from their worship because they have misguided many. Attributing misguidance to the idols signifies the intrinsic

1 Editor's Note: The various nuances in the Qur'an suggest a more focused intent behind Abraham's supplication.

connection between misguidance and them, even if it isn't a sentient connection. It's not always necessary for an action or effect to have a sentient relation with something, even if it's evident.

Then, his statement "*So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me, and as for those who disobey me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful*" is an elaboration of his previous words. Meaning, if many people are led astray by the idols due to their worship, and I have sought Your refuge and presented myself and my descendants to You to protect us from worshipping them, then we and the people are divided into two groups: those who are misguided from the path of Your monotheism and those who dedicate themselves to Your protection and avoidance. Hence, "whoever follows me, etc."

In his elaboration, he expressed with the words: *faman tabi'anī* (So whoever follows me). Following is done on a path. He also alluded to the path when he said, *aḍallan* (led astray) since going astray occurs when one deviates from the path. By "following," he meant adhering to his religion and emulating his way, not merely believing in the oneness of the Almighty. Instead, it's about walking the path based on monotheism, thereby presenting oneself to His mercy and avoiding idol worship.[1]

Evidence that "following" refers to walking his path is evident in his equivalent words: *wa man ʿaṣānī* (and for those who disobey me). He attributed the disobedience to himself and did not say: whoever disbelieves in You, or disobeys You, or deviates from the truth, and so on. Similarly, he didn't say whoever believes in You, obeys You, fears You, or anything alike.

By "following" him, he means walking his path and embracing all that he brought, both in belief and action. Conversely, by "disobeying" him, he refers to abandoning his way and neglecting what he has brought in terms of religious law, both in belief and practice. It is as if he (Abraham) is saying: whoever follows me, abides by my religious law, and walks in my footsteps, he is aligned with me and is considered one of my kindred. I ask for your protection for both him and me against idol worship. However, whoever disobeys me, whether fully or partially, whether from my descendants or not, I do not count him as one with me. I do not seek your protection for

1 Editor's note: Abraham emphasizes the significance of adherence through the conjunction "*fa*" (so) in his assertion.

him; instead, I leave his fate to your forgiveness and mercy.

From this, it becomes evident that his statement, "*So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me, and as for those who disobey me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful*," is an explanation of his earlier words, "*And save me and my children from worshiping idols*." This involves generalizing and specifying the term 'children'. It's akin to generalizing the children (or descendents) to include everyone who follows him and specifying it to refer to those among them who disobey him; thus, they are not of him or aligned with him. In essence, he associates those who follow him after his time with himself. As for those who do not follow his path, he entrusts them to their Merciful and Forgiving Lord. This is in line with the Qur'anic verse: "*Indeed, the nearest of all people to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who have faith*" (Āl 'Imrān:68).

It is evident that the broadening and narrowing approach adopted by Abraham mirrors what has been articulated both by him and his Lord in another section of his supplication, as narrated by the verse: "*and provide its people with fruits—such of them as have faith in Allah and the Last Day,' He said, 'As for him who is faithless, I will provide for him* (*too*) *for a short time, then I will shove him toward the punishment of the Fire and it is an evil destination*'" (al-Baqarah:126). Initially, he prayed for the sustenance of all inhabitants of the town, then specifically for the believers among them. God, in His infinite wisdom, then generalized it with His statement, "*And as for him who is faithless.*"

Secondly, it's conceivable to infer from his statement regarding those who followed him: "Indeed, belongs to me," and his silence concerning those who opposed him—especially after his supplication for himself and his descendants—that this represents an endorsement from him for all who followed him and an association of them with himself. Conversely, it denotes a disassociation from all who opposed him, even if they were his descendants by birth. Or, it could signify an association of his followers with himself while remaining silent about others, based on the implicit nature of silence in indicating negation.

There is no issue with this view once the evidence becomes clear. Biological birth doesn't necessarily dictate lineage, neither in affirmation nor in negation. You won't find any nation that limits lineage, either in affirmation or negation, solely to natural birth. Instead, they continuously

adjust their criteria, either broadening or narrowing it. Islam also has stipulations in this regard, such as the disavowal of a false claimant, a child born out of adultery, a non-believer, an apostate, while including a foster child or a child born from adultery and so on.[1]

Thirdly: Although he (Abraham) did not explicitly request forgiveness and mercy for those who defied him, he nonetheless presented them to God's mercy with his words: "*And for those who disobey me, you are indeed Forgiving, Merciful*." Yet, this does not lack an implicit indication towards seeking God's grace for those who have deviated from his established path—a path that conditions humanity for divine compassion by safeguarding them from idol worship. This degree of transgression doesn't negate the encompassment of mercy, even if it doesn't necessarily demand it. The intent here isn't the essence of associating partners with God, which would contradict the plea for forgiveness. As the Almighty says, " *Indeed Allah does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything besides that to whomever He wishes*" (al-Nisa':116).

This is the essence of what contemplation on the two noble verses reveals. It remains distinct from the difficulties that the exegetes faced in certain parts of these verses, which led them to various interpretations, diverging from sound discernment.

They particularly grappled with the statement of Prophet Abraham: "*And save me and my children from worshiping idols.*" At its surface, this appears as a request for protection from idol worship for both himself and all his descendants. If this were the case, it suggests an unanswered prayer, especially considering the Quraysh from his lineage were idolaters. How could a figure like Abraham supplicate and not have it answered? Moreover, how could the Almighty mention his plea, if it were merely inconsequential, without indicating its non-acceptance, contrary to the Qur'anic approach in other similar contexts? Furthermore, how could he, being a prophet, request protection for himself from idol worship when prophets are inherently protected from such misguidance?

In addressing this dilemma regarding the perceived non-acceptance of his supplication for his descendants, some say the term "descendants"

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1 Editor's Note: See also God's words regarding the son of Noah: "*Indeed, he is not of your family; indeed, his work is unrighteous,*" (Hūd: 6).

specifically refers to his direct children, like Ishmael and Isaac, for whom his supplication was indeed granted. Others argue it pertains to those of his lineage who were present at the time of this supplication and were monotheistic. Yet another perspective holds that God did answer his prayer for some descendants and not for others, and there's no inadequacy in the supplication itself.

It has been suggested that the polytheists among his descendants did not actually worship idols; instead, they took them as intermediaries. Another view posits that they worshipped deities, distinct from idols; where *asnam* (idols) are the sculpted images, and *awthan* are unsculpted ones. A different opinion proposes that they didn't worship these idols at all. Rather, an individual would erect a stone, declaring, "This is a stone, and the house is a stone," and would then circumambulate the stone, a practice they termed as "that which is circled around" (*al-Dawwār*).

The flaws in these perspectives are clear:

(1) The first and second views contradict the apparent wording.

(2) The third view's issue is not about casting doubts on the prophet due to some of his prayers not being answered; instead, it diverges from the Qur'anic approach of recounting irrelevant speech without refuting it.

Regarding the other views, the core of the error in idol worship is associating partners in worship, which is a consistent theme across all these perspectives.

In addressing the query about the prophet's plea for distance and aversion from idolatry, being an infallible prophet, some suggest the request was for steadfastness and perseverance. Others believe that Prophet Abraham articulated this out of humility, showcasing his reliance on the divine grace. Another perspective is that the plea was to be safeguarded from subtle forms of *shirk* (associating partners with God), as prophets are inherently protected against its manifest forms.

All these views are debatable. The first one is problematic as it fails to address the core issue: just as infallibility and divine protection are inherent to prophethood, their initiation is as vital as their persistence. If it were deemed inappropriate for a prophet to request their initiation due to its essential nature, then it would equally be unsuitable for him to seek their maintenance for the same reason. The underlying argument here

suggests a separation between divine grace and its Giver, implying that the beneficiary becomes self-sufficient once blessed. This suggests that once God bestows a favor, that favor exits His realm, making the beneficiary its sole possessor. Thus, it becomes pointless to ask of One who no longer has control. Additionally, if God ordains a matter, be it its inception or its endurance, it's a final decree unalterable from its course. This viewpoint erroneously concludes that God lacks the power or intent to counteract such a decree. However, the recipient's dependence remains unchanged post-bestowal, and God's sovereignty persists unaltered. God always retains the power to will as He desires, even if He doesn't act against an established decree. Requests and supplications emerge from a sense of need, not a sense of deprivation. Grasp this concept, a point we've expanded upon in earlier discussions numerous times.

Regarding the second view, self-deprecation (lowering oneself) is applicable only to non-critical matters and not foundational ones. Thus, when someone claims, "I am not a human" as a form of humility, it's nonsensical unless he's negating perfection. Similarly, when referring to expressing a sense of need, it's not perceived as necessary in definitive matters, such as the infallibility inherent in prophets.

Regarding the third point, hidden polytheism is characterized by reliance on and orientation towards entities other than God across its various manifestations. Abraham justified his plea of "And keep me away..." by referencing the misguidance caused by these entities, saying "Indeed, they have led astray...." His request focuses solely on avoiding the worship of these idols, representing explicit polytheism, rather than seeking protection from placing reliance or directing one's attention to anything other than God. However, this perspective might change if one assumes that the term "idol" encompasses anything directed towards other than God, and that "worship" implies an overarching devotion and focus. Nonetheless, such a claim lacks concrete evidence.

A contention arose regarding the statement of the Prophet Abraham, "*and as for those who disobey me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful,*" as it seemingly seeks forgiveness for polytheists. Yet, associating partners with God precludes forgiveness, as emphasized in the verse: "*indeed Allah does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him*" (al-Nisa':116).

One perspective posits that previous religious laws permitted the forgiveness of polytheism. It was only in the current doctrine, underscored by "indeed God does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him," that this leniency was revised. Consequently, Prophet Abraham based his prayer on the conventions of his own religious code.

And it was said, what is intended by "And as for those who disobey me" and persists in polytheism, then "You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful" by transferring him from polytheism to monotheism, thus You forgive and have mercy on him.

Another opinion suggests that the phrase "*And for those who disobey me, indeed, You are Forgiving and Merciful*" implies mercy following one's repentance, hinting at an unspoken stipulation. Additionally, another view holds that should one defy the Prophet but remain steadfast in polytheism, God's forgiveness and mercy manifest in guiding them from polytheism to monotheism.[1]

Some argue that by "forgiveness" and "mercy," the intent is to veil the act of polytheism in this world. The "mercy" implies not hastening the punishment. Thus, the meaning is: "For those who defy me by adhering to polytheism, shield that act and be merciful by postponing their punishment." Others suggest that this statement was made by Prophet Abraham before he realized that God does not pardon polytheism. This unawareness doesn't diminish his position because, rationally, the forgiveness of polytheism is conceivable. It's only the revealed evidence that prohibits it, and it's not imperative for one to be aware of all such evidences in a single day. A further viewpoint is that the term "disobedience" here refers to sins excluding polytheism.

All these answers are flawed. The first argument claims that polytheism was forgivable under earlier religious laws, but there's no evidence supporting this. Contrarily, evidence suggests the opposite. For instance, God spoke to Adam, who is representative of the earliest religious laws, saying: "*But those who are faithless and deny Our signs, they shall be the inmates of the Fire and they shall remain in it* (*forever*)..." (al-Baqarah:39). Additionally, concerning the teachings of Jesus—representing the final

1 Editor's Note: That is, "And whoever disobeys me" and persists in polytheism, then "You are Forgiving and Merciful"

pre-Islamic religious laws—it's mentioned: "*Indeed whoever ascribes partners to Allah, Allah shall forbid him* (*entry into*) *paradise, and his refuge shall be the Fire, and the wrongdoers will not have any helpers*" (al-Ma'idah:72). Reflecting on the Qur'anic verses about resurrection, paradise, hellfire, intercession, and the prayers (and invitations) of prophets confirms that polytheists can't attain salvation through intercession or any means other than repentance before their death.

As for the second argument, asserting that forgiveness and mercy are conditional upon repentance is an unwarranted restriction. Arguably, if disobedience is restricted to those who repent, it disrupts the symmetry in the saying, "*So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me and as for those who disobey me...*" This is because a disobedient person who repents then aligns with those who follow him (Abraham), rendering the comparison one-sided.

Regarding the third and fourth points, they seem to contradict the apparent meaning of the verse. Apparently, asking for forgiveness implies that God would pardon the sinner while they are in the act, not just after they've repented and returned to obedience. The clear implication of seeking forgiveness (for disobedience) is to alleviate the repercussions of the sin, whether wholly or in the afterlife. However, the idea of removing just the worldly consequences seems far-fetched and hard to grasp.

The fifth perspective seems the least plausible. How could the friend of God (*al-Khalil*), in his later years, be unaware of fundamental religious truths and seek intercession and forgiveness for the polytheists without divine permission? If he had, God might have indicated its impossibility. In His words, God draws attention to these misinformed utterances borne from ignorance. He doesn't immediately correct or elucidate their actual essence, but later provides clarity about Abraham's disassociation from his polytheistic father: "*Abraham's pleading forgiveness for his father was only to fulfill a promise he had made him. So when it became manifest to him that he was an enemy of God, he repudiated him*" (al-Tawba:114).

The sixth perspective seems vague; to categorize sin as anything less than polytheism requires further context, aligning perhaps with previous discussions.

This encapsulates the insights of Qur'anic commentators concerning the two verses. While we've refined their perspectives, certain views seem

misaligned, especially in light of God's unequivocal position on polytheism and the intricate meaning behind "So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me" and its associated allusions.

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(14:37) 'Our Lord! I have settled part of my descendants in a barren valley, by Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may maintain the prayer. So make the hearts of a part of the people fond of them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks'

The phrase, *from my descendants* (translated here as *part of my descendants*) in this verse serves to clarify the object of the verb, "I have settled" (*askantu*) to emphasize its scope. The Arabic particle "*min*" here denotes a portion or a part. What is implied by "*from his descendants*" refers to Ishmael and those who would be born from his lineage, not just Ishmael alone, as evidenced by his subsequent words: "*so that they may give thanks.*"

As for the phrase "in a barren valley," (*ghayr dhī zarʿin*) it implies without vegetation. This description is more emphatic and eloquent, as it indicates—as some have said—the land's unsuitability for cultivation because it's rocky and sandy, devoid of fertile materials. This is akin to the expression: "an Arabic Qurʾān, without any deviousness" (*ghayr dhī ʿiwajin*) (al-Zumar:28).

The attribution of the House to God is because it was constructed for a purpose that is only fitting for Him alone, which is His worship. Its sanctity, denoted by the term *muḥarram*, is due to the sanctified status God legislatively assigned to it. The adverbial phrase, meaning "by Your Sacred House," relates to the phrase "I have settled."

This passage from his supplication, specifically the part that says, "*Our Lord! I have settled part of my descendants in a barren valley, by Your sacred House*" serves as evidence for what we have previously mentioned: that he made this supplication in the latter part of his life after he had built the Kaʿbah. People then constructed the town of Mecca and inhabited it. Furthermore, supporting this perspective is his statement: "*All praise*

*belongs to Allah, who gave me Ishmael and Isaac despite* (*my*) *old age*."

Thus, this addresses a potential point of contention where one might ask: How did he call it a "House" and say, "*I have settled part of my descendants,*" when it had not yet been constructed? It seems the questioner assumes that he only made this supplication on the day he brought Ishmael and his mother to the land of Mecca, which at that time was a barren land with neither companion nor vegetation.

There's no need to assert that Abraham knew, by what God had informed him, that he would build a house for God there, or that the House existed before and was either destroyed by some factions or was elevated by God to the heavens during the Flood. One wonders, if these explanations are presented to address this issue, how then do we reconcile with the apparent meaning of the statement, "*Make this city a sanctuary*" and the clear statement "*who gave me Ishmael and Isaac despite* (*my*) *old age*"?[1]

Abraham's statement, "*Our Lord, that they may maintain the prayer*," clarifies his purpose for settling them there. When combined with his previous statement about a "*in a barren valley*" and his subsequent plea, "*So make the hearts of a part of the people fond of them, and provide them with fruits*," it indicates that he deliberately chose a barren valley, devoid of life's luxuries like fresh water, lush vegetation, pleasant trees, and a temperate climate, and free from any inhabitants, so that they could wholeheartedly devote themselves to the worship of God without the distractions of worldly affairs.

His supplication, "*So make the hearts of a part of the people fond of them*,"[2] uses the term "inclination" (*hawī*) in the sense of being drawn or gravitating towards something. It implies that people should feel an affinity and inclination towards them, either by settling with them or by making the pilgrimage (Hajj) to the Sacred House, finding comfort in their

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1 Editor's note: In simpler terms, the author is pointing out that if one explanation is accepted for a particular issue, it may lead to complications or inconsistencies when interpreting related issues or statements in the religious texts. The author prompts the reader to think critically about the broader implications of accepting certain explanations.

2 Another translation says: "*Make the hearts of mankind incline towards them*." (Ed.)

presence. Moreover, "*and provide for them with fruits*" suggests enabling trade to be directed towards them, "*so they may give thanks*."[1]

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

(14:38) Our Lord! Indeed You know whatever we hide and whatever we disclose, and nothing is hidden from Allah on the earth or in the sky.

The essence of this verse is self-evident. The statement, "*and nothing is concealed from Allah on the earth or in the heavens*" can either be from the speech of Prophet Abraham or a continuation of God's words. In the first view, the term "*from Allah*" serves as a reference, pointing to the reason or cause for the statement. It's as if it's being said: "You are well-aware of what we conceal and reveal because You are God, from whom nothing is hidden, be it on the earth or in the heavens." It is possible to infer from this rationale that "the heavens" refers to what is hidden or unknown to us and beyond our sensory perception, whereas "the earth" signifies the opposite. This distinction should be understood.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴿٣٩﴾

(14:39) All praise belongs to Allah, who gave me Ishmael and Isaac despite (my) old age. Indeed my Lord hears all supplications.

This statement stands as an interjection amidst his supplications, highlighting the immense blessings God bestowed upon him. Prophet Abraham recalls this within his other prayers, acknowledging the profound favor from God when He granted him two righteous sons even after the usual means of having offspring seemed impossible. Indeed, these blessings were

1 Editor's note: Prophet Abraham's supplication in choosing a barren valley for his offspring reflects deep foresight and trust in God. It was designed to foster an environment of divine worship. His use of "inclination" anticipates a spiritual draw towards this place for settlement and pilgrimage. His prayer balances physical sustenance with spiritual growth, demonstrating his profound grasp of human nature and unwavering faith in God's design.

granted only in response to his fervent prayers for offspring. Thus, he praised and thanked God for this gift and for answering his prayers.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ ﴿٤٠﴾

(14:40) My Lord! Make me a maintainer of prayer, and my descendants (as well). Our Lord, accept my supplication.

This verse emphasizes his reliance on God in upholding his prayers. This mirrors his reliance on God when seeking protection from idol worship. Establishing prayer is attributed to God in terms of permission and will, just as it is attributed to the servant in terms of commitment and action, a matter which has been previously discussed.

The passage reflects the second supplication in which he and his descendants participate. It naturally follows his earlier plea, "*Save me and my children from worshipping idols*." This is further succeeded by his third joint supplication: "*Our Lord, forgive me, my parents, and all the faithful*."

In all three sections, Abraham singled himself out from others when he said: "*Save me*," "*Make me a maintainer of prayer*," and "*Forgive me*." This is because his request also encompasses the rights of his descendants, as he said in another place: "*Confer on me a worthy repute among the posterity*" (al-Shu'arā':84). And in another instance, as God narrated: "*When his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imām of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust*.'" (al-Baqarah:124).

As for his statement in the first section: "*Save me and my children from worshipping idols*," and here: "*Make me a maintainer of prayer, and my descendants* (*as well*)," it was mentioned earlier that what he means by his children are some of them, not all. These two sections align with each other.

One of the reasons for the alignment between these two sections is his emphasis in this section with his statement: "*Our Lord, accept my supplication*." Indeed, his request for the acceptance of his supplication is an act of insistence and emphasis. Similarly, the rationale in the first section, with his statement: "*Indeed, they have led many astray*," truly emphasizes his supplication found in: "*Save me and my children from worshipping idols.*"

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾

(14:41) 'Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and all the

faithful, on the day when the reckoning is held.'

This is the last part of Abraham's supplication mentioned in the noble Qur'an. He concludes his supplication by seeking forgiveness for the believers on the Day of Judgment. This is reminiscent of the ending of Noah's supplication mentioned in the Qur'an: "*My Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house in faith, and the faithful men and women*" (Nūḥ:28).

This verse offers evidence that Abraham was not the son of Āzar, the idolater, because he seeks forgiveness for his parents in his old age, at the end of their lives. He had already disavowed Āzar early in his life after asking forgiveness for him due to a promise he had made. The Almighty says, "*He said, 'Peace be to you! I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you'*" (Maryam:47). Abraham also said, "*Forgive my father for he is one of those who are astray*" (Ash-Shuʿarā': 86). Moreover, it is mentioned, "*Abraham's pleading forgiveness for his father was only to fulfill a promise he had made him. So when it became manifest to him that he was an enemy of God, he repudiated him*" (al-Tawbah:114). A detailed discussion on this matter has been provided earlier in the analysis of his story in Sūrah al-Anʿām in the seventh volume of this book.[1]

One of the subtle aspects of Abraham's supplication is the variation in his call, alternating between "My Lord" and "Our Lord," and the meticulousness in how he references matters specific to himself, such as his foremostness and the position of Imām, and when he refers to matters related to both him and others.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Abū Nuʿaym's *al-Dalā'il,* it is reported from ʿAqīl b. Abī Ṭālib that when six individuals from the *Anṣār* came to the Prophet, he sat with them by the fire at '*Aqabah*. He invited them to God and to support His religion. They asked him to recite what was revealed to him, so he recited from Sūrah Ibrāhīm: "*My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary, and save me and my children from worshiping idols*," until the end of the sūrah. Upon hearing this, the men departed, humbled and in agreement.

1 See English Vol. 13. (Ed.)

(2) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, from Abū ʿUbaydah through Imām al-Ṣādiq, he said: "Whoever loves us is from us, the Ahl al-Bayt." I asked, "Am I from you?" He replied, "You are indeed from us. Have you not heard the word of God, and it is the word of Abraham: '*So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me*.'"

(3) In the same source, from Muḥammad al-Ḥalbī through Imām al-Ṣādiq, he said: "Whoever among you fears God and is righteous is from us, the Ahl al-Bayt." I asked, "From us, the Ahl al-Bayt?" He answered, "Yes, from us, the Ahl al-Bayt. Hasn't Abraham said, '*So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me*'? Umar b. Yazīd asked him, 'Are they from the family of Muḥammad?' He affirmed, 'Yes, by God, from the family of Muḥammad. Have you not heard the saying of God: '*Indeed the nearest of all people to Abraham are those who follow him*'[1] and Abraham's saying, '*So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me*?'"

**Author's comment:** There is a narration that suggests the sons of Ishmael never worshipped idols due to Abraham's prayer: "*and save me and my children from worshiping idols*." This seems dubious, and the topic has been discussed earlier.

Furthermore, some narrations from both Sunni and Shi'a sources claim that the land of *Ṭā'if* was originally in Jordan, part of Palestine. This land supposedly moved to Mecca after Abraham prayed for his descendants: "*And provide them with fruits*." Such narrations are weak and insufficient to prove their authenticity.

Although the miraculous element is possible, weak and *mursal* narrations are not enough to substantiate this. The focus of these verses is gratitude, and if such miraculous deeds were related to this gratitude, it would have been emphasized more. And God knows best.

In another *mursal* narration from *al-ʿAyyāshī*, Harīz quotes from one of the Imāms that he used to recite "*Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents,*" referring to Ishmael and Isaac. Another *mursal* from Jābir through Abū Jaʿfar supports this. However, these two narrations are weak and should not be taken into account.

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1 Qur'an, 3:68 (Ed.)

## Verses 42-52

When God provided warnings and glad tidings in the preceding verses and invited to His Path, highlighting His attributes of being Almighty and Praiseworthy, He concluded His explanation by addressing the doubts that may arise in the minds of those with weaker intellects. They might ponder: If everything is as stated, and this call is indeed a prophetic invitation from the Praiseworthy and Almighty Lord, then why do these wrongdoers continue to indulge in their desires unchecked? Why doesn't He punish the oppressors for their transgressions or hold accountable those who oppose His divine call and commands? Is He unaware of their actions, or has He not kept His promise to His Messengers, having assured them of His support, only to seemingly renege on it?

In response, God clarifies that He is neither unaware of the wrongdoers' actions nor does He break His promises to His Messengers. How could this be when He is fully aware of their schemes and is both Almighty and the One who exacts retribution? Rather, He delays their reckoning for a significant day, the Day of Retribution. Additionally, at times, God does mete out punishment for their sins in this very world, as has been the case with past communities.

Concluding the chapter, He declares: "*This is a proclamation for mankind, so that they may be warned thereby and know that He is indeed the One God, and those who possess intellect may take admonition.*" This verse encapsulates the purpose of this chapter, the details of which will be discussed later, God willing.

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٤٢﴾ مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ وَأَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَاءٌ ﴿٤٣﴾

(14:42-43) Do not suppose that Allah is oblivious of what the wrongdoers are doing. He is only granting them respite until the day when the eyes will be glazed. Scrambling with their heads upturned, there will be a fixed gaze in their eyes, and their hearts

will be vacant.

The phrase *shakhaṣa baṣaruhu* in Arabic denotes a situation where someone's eyelids cease to move, essentially meaning they do not blink at all. Similarly, the Arabs use the term *baʿīr muhṭiʿ* which translates to "a beast with its neck upturned." The verbs *haṭaʿā* and *ahṭaʿa* in Arabic share a similar essence with *aqnaʿa,* signifying "he turned his head upwards." Consequently, the segment of the verse: "*there will be a fixed gaze in their eyes*," conveys that they are incapacitated to lift their eyelids. Their hearts remain in a state of confusion, lacking understanding and contemplation, either due to their extreme obstinacy in their stance or perhaps they are bereft of their senses.

The meaning is: "Do not to assume or even surmise that God is unaware or neglectful of the actions of these transgressors. Observing their affluence, arrogance, and the subsequent chaos they perpetrate on earth might suggest so. However, God is simply affording them a temporary respite, postponing their retribution to a day when their gaze will be fixed and unblinking. On that day, their posture will be such that their necks are extended and heads elevated, rendering them unable to shut their eyes. Their hearts will be in turmoil, devoid of any scheming or contemplation, overwhelmed by the intense terror of the Day of Resurrection." This verse serves as a cautionary message for the wrongdoers and offers comfort to the rest.

وَأَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمُ الْعَذَابُ فَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا أَخِّرْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ أَوَلَمْ تَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُم مِّن قَبْلُ مَا لَكُم مِّن زَوَالٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

(14:44) Warn the people of the day when the punishment will overtake them, whereat the wrongdoers will say, 'Our Lord! Respite us for a short time so that we may respond to Your call and follow the messengers.' (They will be told,) 'Did you not use to swear earlier that there would be no reverse for you...'

In this verse, there is a warning following another warning. However, there are two distinctions between these warnings:

**Nature of the Warnings:** The first warning, present in the previous

two verses, alludes to the terrors of the Day of Resurrection and the severe torment that will be witnessed. Meanwhile, the warning in this verse and the subsequent one alludes to the punishment of eradication in this worldly life. As evidence for this, consider the verse, "*whereat the wrongdoers will say, 'Our Lord! Respite us for a short time...*'"

This illuminates that it's not appropriate, as some have mentioned, to interpret this day—when the punishment will be unleashed—as the Day of Resurrection. Likewise, the interpretation that this day refers to the day of death is also not legitimate.

**Scope of the Warnings:** The initial warning is about an inevitable punishment, from which neither a transgressing nation nor an individual transgressor from that nation can escape. As for the second warning, it speaks of a punishment from which a transgressing nation cannot escape, but occasionally, an individual transgressor might be spared. This distinction is further underscored by God saying, "*Warn the people*," followed by "*whereat the wrongdoers will say....*" He doesn't say "they all say," implying not all of humanity. This is because the punishment of eradication doesn't befall believers. God states: "*Then We shall deliver Our apostles and those who have faith. Thus it is a must for Us to deliver the faithful* (Yūnus:103)." Only the transgressing nations experience the culmination of their predetermined fate, and more specifically, only a subset of the transgressors within those nations, not all of its individuals.

In essence, the statement, "*Warn the people of the day when the punishment will overtake them*," serves as a warning to humanity about the eradication punishment, which will ultimately be the undoing of the wrongdoers among them. Numerous chapters, including the commentary of Sūrah Yūnus and others, have affirmed that this is a predetermined fate for the nations, an inevitable encounter between them and their messenger, even for this Ummah (community) of the Prophet Muḥammad.

This is the day when God purifies the Earth from the filth of polytheism and oppression. On this day, none shall be worshiped but God. Since the admonition is general, and the nation consists of the people of the Earth, once God eradicates polytheism from among them, only the believers remain. Hence, the entire religion belongs to God. He states: "*Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth*'" (al-Anbiyā':105).

From the preceding discussion, it's evident that the interpretation of the punishment in the verse as 'extermination' is challenged by the stipulation in the prior verse. Specifically, His assertion: "*He is only granting them respite until the day when the eyes will be glazed*" delineates their punishment solely to the Day of Resurrection.

This understanding emerges from recognizing that the warned punishment in the two preceding verses is the inescapable one, from which no evader can divert and no wrongdoer can abstain. It is exclusively reserved for the Day of Resurrection. This confinement to the Day of Resurrection does not contradict the presence of another type of punishment in this worldly life.

But if we interpret this confinement in line with the objector's perspective, it diverges from the many verses that allude to the impending punishment for this nation, as noted earlier.

Interpreting the punishment in the verse as solely pertaining to the Day of Resurrection necessitates diverting the verses from their apparent meaning and disregarding the context they offer, which is untenable.

Regarding His saying, "*whereat the wrongdoers will say, 'Our Lord! Respite us for a short time so that we may respond to Your call and follow the messengers.'*" By 'wrongdoers' He means the unjust among the people. They are those who are seized by the ingrained punishment and it does not bypass them. What they mean by their saying, "*Respite us for a short time,*" is a request for a brief extension to their lives in this world so they can make amends for what they missed due to their injustices. This is evident from their statement, "*so that we may respond to Your call and follow the messengers.*"

In the phrase "and follow the messengers," the plural form 'messengers' is used, even though the verse primarily describes the wrongdoers of this nation. One might expect it to say "and follow the messenger" instead. This plural usage highlights that the purpose of the punishment is to distinguish between the genuine message and those who reject it, rather than focusing on a specific messenger. This explanation aligns with the verse, "*There is an apostle for every nation; so when their apostle comes, judgement is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged*" (Yūnus:47).

Regarding the statement, "*Did you not use to swear earlier that there would be no reverse for you...,*" the act of swearing is the attachment of a

statement to something honored or esteemed, used to affirm its truthfulness. If the speaker were to lie after swearing, it would tarnish the honor of what they swore by. For example, when we say: "By God, such and such is the case" or "By my life, the matter is so and so." Oaths are considered among the strongest means of emphasis."

It's plausible that the swearing in the verse is an allusion to presenting the statement in a decisive manner that doesn't allow for any rebuttal.

The speech, based on the consideration of the statement and its meaning, is said to them in a reprimanding and reproachful manner: "Did you not swear before the descent of the punishment that you will not perish? That with your strength, dominance, and defense mechanisms, you considered yourselves an eternal nation that controlled events? So why now do you seek a brief respite?"

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِنِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(14:45) while you dwelt in the dwellings of those who had wronged themselves (before), and it had been made clear to you how We had dealt with them (before you), and We had (also) cited examples for you?'

This is connected to His saying: "*Did you swear*" in the previous verse. The meaning is: Didn't you reside in the homes of previous nations who wronged themselves? You witnessed firsthand that this divine call is true and that rejecting it results in severe punishment. This is evident from two perspectives:

(1) Observation, where you saw for yourselves what happened to those wrongdoers whose homes you took residence in.

(2) Clarification, where parables were provided for you, and you were warned of a relentless punishment that follows the denial of truth and the rejection of the prophetic call, a punishment that completely overwhelms the wrongdoers.

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللهِ مَكْرُهُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُولَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ﴿٤٦﴾

(14:46) They certainly devised their plots, but their plots are known to Allah, though their plot had been one to move mountains.

This statement pertains either to the pronoun "We" in "We had dealt" in the previous verse, or to the pronoun "them" in "with them" or possibly to both pronouns, as suggested by some scholars. The plural pronouns refer back to "those who had wronged."

The phrase "*their plots are known to Allah*" means that God encompasses their plot with His knowledge and power. Typically, a plot is considered effective only when the one plotted against is unaware and oblivious to it. However, if the targeted individual knows about the plot and can counteract it, then the plot loses its effect. Even more so if the counteraction redirects the plot back onto the plotter, as the Almighty says: "*Yet they do not plot except against their own souls, but they are not aware*" (al-Anʿām:123).

His saying, "*though their plot had been one to move mountains*"[1]—the word "though" (or "even if") is said to be connecting, and the "*lam*" in "to move" (*li-tazūl*) is associated with an implied meaning indicated by the term "plot," similar to when we say "requires" or "necessitates." This means God is encompassing their scheme, knowledgeable of it, and capable of countering it, whether the scheme is of this intense nature or not.

In other words, "The essence is clear to you about how We dealt with them, especially since they plotted to the best of their capability. God is fully aware of their plot, even if it's immense enough to displace mountains."

There is a meaning which suggests that the particle "*in*" is used for negation, while the particle "*lām*" pertains to what is negated. The term "mountains" here is allegorically referring to divine signs or miracles. Hence, the interpretation suggests that their plots cannot nullify God's Signs and His Miracles, akin to the towering mountains that stand immovable. This meaning aligns with the recitation of Ibn Masʿūd, which reads *wa mā kāna makruhum* (and their plot was not); though it is deemed a distant interpretation.

The term *li-tazūl* has also been recited with a *fatḥah* on the first "*lām*" and a *ḍammah* on the second "*lām*." According to this, the particle "*in*"

1 Editor's note: The alternate reading of this phrase is: "Even though their schemes are indeed such as to dislodge (or annihilate) (even) the mountains."

would persist without a *shaddah*. The established meaning then is that their plots were so formidable that they could cause the mountains to crumble.

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهِ رُسُلَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

**(14:47) So do not suppose that Allah will break His promise to His messengers. Indeed Allah is all-mighty, Avenger.**

This verse emerges as a logical consequence (using the conjunction "*so*"), based on the preceding context, emphasizing that the punishment of transgressors for their actions is merely deferred until the Day of Resurrection. In essence, do not assume that God will renege on His promise to His messengers, wherein He vowed to support them and penalize those who resist their call. How could God ever break His promise, especially when He is characterized as the All-Powerful and the Avenger of wrongs? His absolute Might ensures that He remains true to His word. Indeed, to breach a promise typically arises from one of two scenarios: either the promisor is incapable of fulfilling the commitment, or there's a shift in stance triggered by changing circumstances, compelling the promisor to act contrary to the initial situation which mandated the pledge. Yet, God's Might is unequivocal. He cannot be deemed impotent, nor can He be swayed by externalities or subjected to any external force. He is the One and the Subjugator.

Necessarily, when God is described as the "Avenger," it means He exacts retribution on behalf of the truth against those who arrogantly defy it, considering themselves superior. He also ensures justice for the oppressed against their oppressors.

"The Avenger" is one of God's beautiful names, which He has attributed to Himself in various sections of the Qur'an. Consistently, this name is associated with His other name, "The Mighty (*al-ʿAzīz*)." For instance, He declares, "God is all-mighty, avenger" (Āl ʿImrān:4, al-Ma'idah:95). Another verse asserts, "Is not God an all-mighty avenger?" (al-Zumar:37). He also proclaims in the verse under discussion, "Indeed God is all-mighty, Avenger." From this, it's evident that God's attribute of being the Avenger is intrinsically linked to His title of the Almighty.

## On the Meaning of Revenge and Its Attribution to God

'Revenge' is understood as 'punishment.' However, it doesn't pertain to every form of punishment. Instead, it denotes a specific retaliation. It's the act of causing someone else the same amount of harm or even more than what they inflicted upon you. God has mentioned: "*So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you, and be wary of Allah*" (al-Baqarah:194).

This principle of retaliation is deeply rooted in human behavior. Even certain animals exhibit similar responses. Nevertheless, the motivations driving humans differ. In personal revenge, the primary objective is often retribution. When someone deprives another of good or subjects them to harm, the victim feels a sense of anguish. This distress only subsides when they inflict upon the perpetrator a harm equivalent or greater than what was suffered. The desire for revenge emanates from an intrinsic emotion. The intellect sometimes sanctions this desire, sometimes refrains.

Social revenge, referring to retributive justice seen in societal norms and laws, surpasses mere brutality. Its purpose is grounded in intellect and reason. The aim is to maintain societal order and deter chaos. Without the principle of revenge and penalizing the wrongdoers, societal stability would collapse, and harmony would erode.

Hence, such revenge serves as a societal right. Sometimes individual rights accompany it, like when someone wrongs another. Sometimes the wrongdoer faces punitive actions on behalf of society, and at other times, the victim may choose to forgive.

It's evident that some forms of revenge stem from personal feelings, aiming for personal satisfaction. Others are rational, ensuring societal order, safeguarding societal rights. If desired, these can be seen as upholding societal laws. The establishment of just laws, ensuring human well-being, inherently requires penalizing those who breach them. The punishment meted out is a consequence of their malevolence. It's a societal right, as well as a legal one.

If this is grasped, then one understands that the revenge attributed to God in the Qur'an and Sunnah pertains to the rights of Divine Religion and heavenly laws. Sometimes it also encompasses individual rights, for God avenges the oppressed against their oppressors. He is the Praiseworthy Protector.

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Regarding personal revenge, aiming to satiate one's thirst for retribution, God's exalted essence is above being affected by human misdeeds or benefiting from human righteousness.

Some argue that revenge is merely for personal satisfaction. If God neither gains from nor is affected by human actions, then attributing revenge to Him is baseless. Moreover, His boundless mercy should preclude eternal punishment. Especially when even a compassionate person would pardon an offender, especially unintentional transgressions. Yet, God describes humans as: "*Indeed he is most unfair and senseless*" (al-Aḥzāb:72).

The flaw in this argument is the conflation of personal and societal revenge. God's justice is societal, not personal. The argument also conflates emotional compassion, where one's heart is moved, with rational mercy, which aims to rectify flaws in someone capable of reform. God's mercy is rational, not emotional. Eternal punishment is only meted out when reform is unattainable, as stated: "*Certainly whoever commits misdeeds and is besieged by his iniquity—such shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it* (*forever*)" (al-Baqarah:81).

A nuanced point is that the aforementioned revenge attributed to God is viewed through the lens of reward and punishment. Another perspective is that post-death, the negative forms of deeds manifest within the human soul, due to the acquired bad tendencies during one's life. The discussion on the repercussions of deeds has been elaborated upon in the first volume of this book, under the commentary of: *Indeed Allah is not ashamed to draw a parable whether is that of a gnat or something above it* (al-Baqarah:26).[1]

Commentary continues:

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿٤٨﴾

(14:48) The day when the earth is transformed into another earth and the heavens (as well), and they are presented before Allah, the One, the All-paramount.

1 Editor's note: 'Revenge' in religious contexts transcends personal retaliation. While humans may act from emotion, God's revenge upholds divine rights and laws. The Qur'an distinguishes between emotional and rational mercy, emphasizing that God's justice serves a broader purpose. Earthly actions bear spiritual consequences in the afterlife.

This verse serves as a descriptive clause linked to His statement: *Indeed, Allah is all-mighty, avenger*. Limiting His revenge to the Day of Rising, although it's a general concept that spans all times and circumstances, is due to that day being the pinnacle of Divine Revenge. This is similar to them being presented before God on that particular day. Hence, the attributes mentioned in the Qur'an concerning the Day of Rising are even more majestic. God declares: "*and all command that day will belong to Allah*" (al-Infiṭār:19). He further states: "*not having anyone to protect you from Allah*" (Ghāfir:33). There are also other verses which have been referred to previously.

It's evident that the definite article "*the*" in "the earth," in both instances, signifies the earth we inhabit. The same applies to "the heavens," which is associated with the first mention of "the earth." This implies that this earth will undergo a transformation, and these heavens will be altered from their current state.

Qur'anic commentators have diverse explanations about the transformation of the earth:

(1) Some believe the earth will turn to silver, and the heavens to gold. There's also a notion that the earth will change to a pristine state, resembling silver, and the heavens will undergo a similar transformation.

(2) Others think the earth will become fire and the heavens gardens.

(3) Some opine that the earth will transform into pure bread, which people will consume throughout the Day of Rising.

(4) There's a belief that the earth will transform uniquely for each group according to their status. For some believers, it will become bread, which they will eat throughout the judgement. For others, it will become silver, and for disbelievers, it will turn into fire.

(5) Another interpretation is that the transformation means God will add to and subtract from the earth, erasing its hills, mountains, valleys, and trees. The earth will stretch out, becoming flat and devoid of any irregularities. The heavens will change with the removal of the sun, moon, and stars. Everyone on earth and in the heavens will undergo a transformation based on their attributes and appearance in this world.

The root of their differences concerning the interpretation of "transformed" (*tubaddal*) lies in the various narrations about this verse. Even if these narrations were accurate and consistent, their variations strongly

suggest that their overt meanings are not the intended ones and that their explanations serve merely as illustrative examples.

Reflecting on verses related to the transformation of the heavens and earth suggests that the concept of transformation surpasses our conventional understanding, like mountains expanding on plains or dirt turning to silver or pure bread. For instance, there's the verse: "*And the earth will glow with the light of her Lord*" (al-Zumar:69). Another mentions: "*and the mountains will be set moving and become a mirage*" (al-Naba':20). Additionally, there's: "*and you see the mountains, which you assume are stationary, while they drift like passing clouds*" (al-Naml:88). All these verses focus on the Day of Rising and describe a divine system and purpose that differs from our known understanding. The illumination of the earth by the Light of its Lord on that day is distinct from the straightforward radiance we see from the sun, stars, or any other source. Typically, the movement of mountains results in their dissolution and dispersion, rather than them becoming mirages. We pray to God for guidance and clarity as we delve deeper into the essence of these teachings in the future, by His will.

Regarding the part of the verse that states: "*and they are presented before Allah, the One, the All-paramount*" it means they will be made to appear before God on that day. Despite everything always being visible to Him and never concealed, on that day, all barriers that kept them hidden from Him in this world will vanish. Hence, based on their experiences on that day, no other force will have any influence or control over them, except God, as emphasized by various verses. They won't be distracted or oriented in any direction—neither outwardly nor inwardly, neither in the present nor in the past that's now absent from their actions and conditions—without finding God witnessing, dominating, and encompassing it.

The evidence supporting our explanation is God's description of Himself as the One and the All-Conquering, which implies a form of supremacy. Their presentation before God on that day is solely because He is the One on whom the existence of everything depends, and He overpowers everything else that might exert influence. Hence, no barrier exists between Him and them. Consequently, they will stand before Him without any constraints.

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾ سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطِرَانٍ

وَتَغْشَى وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾

(14:49-50)—on that day you will see the guilty bound together in chains, their garments made of pitch, and the Fire covering their faces,

The word *muqarranīn* is derived from *taqrīn*, signifying the action of pairing or joining something with its counterpart. The term *aṣfād* stands as the plural of *ṣafad*, describing shackles that bind the hand to the neck, or more broadly, chains that connect prisoners together. *Sarābīl* is the plural form of *sirbāl*, representing a garment made of tar or pitch—a dark, foul-smelling substance often applied to camels. This substance will be draped over certain individuals, serving as a shirt-like covering. As for *al-ghashāwah*, it refers to "a covering" or "a veil." The words *ghishiya*, *yaghshā*, and *ghishāwah* convey the sense of being "covered by" (*satarhu*) or "enveloped" (*ghattāhu*). The meaning derived from these two verses is evident.

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥١﴾

(14:51) so that Allah may reward every soul for what it has earned. Indeed Allah is swift at reckoning.

The verse's meaning is lucid. Its overt language indicates that every soul will receive recompense for precisely what they earned, be it good or evil, though its manifestation might differ. This verse is among those highlighting that what will befall individuals on the Day of Resurrection is the direct consequence of their deeds.

The verse serves two primary purposes. First, it elucidates the nature of recompense on the Day of Recompense. Second, it amplifies the notion of God's Retribution on that day. This is not mere punishment meted out to a defiant offender for some personal vendetta. Instead, it is the manifestation of consequences called forth by the offender's actions. If you prefer, consider it as the exact rendition of what the offender had procured.

When explaining this recompense that takes place on the Day of Resurrection through the statement: "Indeed, God is swift in accounting," there is a suggestion that retribution transpires without any intervening delay. However, the specific moment of its revelation is that day

and not any other. Alternatively, the judgment of this recompense and its documentation occurs at the moment of the deed, with its realization unfolding on the Day of Resurrection. Both interpretations converge upon a singular truth in reality.

هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنْذَرُوا بِهِ وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾

(14:52) This is a proclamation for mankind, so that they may be warned thereby and know that He is indeed the One God, and those who possess intellect may take admonition.

The verse's meaning is manifest. According to al-Rāghib, the term *balāgh* signifies conveyance, while others interpret it as denoting sufficiency or adequacy.

This verse concludes the chapter, making it more fitting for its reference to be directed at the clarifications presented within this specific chapter rather than the entirety of the Qur'an, as some suggest. Moreover, it doesn't solely allude to the phrase: "*Do not suppose that Allah is oblivious of what the wrongdoers are doing*" which continues till the end of the chapter, as others have proposed.

Regarding the statement: "*so that they may be warned thereby*," the particle "*lām*" in *li-yundhurū* indicates a purpose and is connected to an omitted concept. This omission arises from the profoundness and magnificence of the matter, which human comprehension struggles to grasp due to its encompassing Divine secrets beyond their capacity. Their intellects can only grapple with the objectives He has delineated, such as warning, imparting knowledge of His Oneness, and providing reminders. Hence, they receive warnings about the divine retribution for the transgressors, which is both imminent and inevitable. Through this verse, they are also presented with unequivocal evidence about the signs of monotheism. Specifically, the believers are reminded of the divine knowledge contained within.

This alignment ensures the chapter's conclusion resonates with its commencement, referring to God's statement at the beginning: "(*This is*) *a Book We have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the All-mighty,*

*the All-laudable.*" It has been previously discussed that the verse underscores the Prophet's role in beckoning and conveying God's Path. This is because God is their Almighty and Praiseworthy Lord, empowering the Prophet to usher humanity from darkness to light. Consequently, if they heed the call and embrace faith, they transition from the darkness of disbelief into the light of belief. If they resist, they are nonetheless cautioned and confronted with the true essence of monotheism, transitioning from ignorance to knowledge—a symbolic movement from darkness to light, albeit with inherent perils and losses. Within this call, regardless of the response, humanity is cautioned, informed of His oneness, and reminded, specifically targeting those endowed with discernment, the believers.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Ma'ānī*, narrated from Thawbān: A Jew came to the Prophet and said, "O Muhammad!" Thawbān lifted him up with his leg and said, "Say: O Messenger of God." He responded, "I will only call him by the names of his people." He then asked, "What do you think about the verse of God, '*The day when the earth is transformed into another earth and the heavens* (*as well*)'? Where will people be on that day?" The Prophet answered, "In darkness, before the Gathering." The Jew then asked, "What is the first thing that the people of Paradise will eat when they enter it?" He replied, "The liver of a whale." "And what will their drink be afterward?" The Jew continued. "The *Salsabeel*," replied the Prophet. "You have spoken the truth, O Muhammad," the Jew concluded.

**Author's comment:** The Hadith is narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, from Muslim, Ibn Jarīr, al-Hākim, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalā'il*, attributing it to Thawbān; it stops at the point of people being "in darkness." It is also narrated from multiple sources, including 'Ā'ishah, who asked the Prophet about this and he said they would be "on the *Ṣirāṭ*."

(2) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, narrated from Thuwayr b. Abī Fākhtah from al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (peace be upon them both), it says, "*the earth is transformed into another earth*," meaning to a land where no sins have been committed, plain without any mountains or vegetation, just as it was initially created.

**Author's comment:** This is also reported by al-Qummī in his *Tafsīr*,

and it indicates that mountains and vegetation will appear after the Earth is fully formed.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, narrated by al-Bazzār, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Ba'th*, from Ibn Mas'ūd, he says the Messenger of God mentioned regarding the verse '*The day when the earth is transformed into another earth*': "It will be a white land as if it's made of silver, in which no forbidden blood was shed, and no sin was committed."

**Author's comment:** This is also narrated by Ibn Mardawayh from ʿAlī, saying something similar.

(4) Further, narrated by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in *Ṣifat al-Jannah*, and Ibn Jarīr, and Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib regarding the verse, it says, "The earth will be changed to silver and the sky to gold."

**Author's comment:** Some have interpreted this metaphorically, as also seen in the previous Hadith from Ibn Mas'ūd.

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, narrated from Zurārah from Imām al-Bāqir, he was asked by Abū Rash al-Kalbī regarding the verse '*The day when the earth is transformed into another earth,*' he replied, "It will be changed into pure bread that people will eat from until the accounting is over." The narrator then said, "Then people on that day will be too busy to eat!" Imām al-Bāqir replied, "They are in Hell, not too busy to eat from the tree of Zaqqūm and drink boiling water, while they are in torment. How will they be too busy during the accounting?"

**Author's comment:** And his statement, "*It will be replaced with pure bread*," can be interpreted metaphorically, as may be inferred from the following report.

(6) In *Irshād al-Mufīd* and *Iḥtijāj al-Ṭabarīsī*, from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allah al-Zuhrī who said: Ḥishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik performed Hajj and entered the Masjid al-Ḥarām leaning on Sālim, his freed slave, and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (Imām al-Bāqir) was sitting in the mosque. Salim, his freed slave said, "O Commander of the Faithful, this is Muḥammad b. ʿAlī." Ḥishām said, "Is he the one the people of Iraq are fascinated by?" He said, "Yes." Then he said, "Go to him and say: The Commander of the

Faithful asks you, what will people eat and drink until the Day of Judgment separates them?" Imām al-Bāqir said: "People will be resurrected resembling a pure disc in which rivers are bursting forth. They will eat and drink until the account is settled."

**Author's comment:** Ḥishām thought he had caught him and said, "Allahu Akbar. Go to him and ask: What will distract them from eating and drinking on that Day?" Imām al-Bāqir said: "They are preoccupied in Hell and have not been preoccupied from that. They say, 'Pour upon us some water or some of what God has provided you.'" Ḥishām fell silent, having no words to respond.

(7) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh narrated from Aflaḥ, the freed slave of Abū Ayyūb: A man from the Jews asked the Prophet, "'The day the earth will be changed to a different earth', what will it be changed with?" He said, "A loaf of bread," then the Jew said, "You are protected by my father." The Prophet laughed then said, "May God destroy the Jews, do you know what the loaf means?"

(8) And in another narration from Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū Naʿīm in *al-Dalā'il,* from Abī Ayyūb al-Anṣārī who said: "A Jewish Rabbi came to the Prophet and said, 'Have you considered when God says, '*The day when the earth is transformed into another earth*,' where will the creatures be at that time?' The Prophet said, 'The guests of God will not be burdened by what is with Him.'"

**Author's comment:** The different narrations about the interpretation of changing do not lack an indication that they are parables struck for approximation. What is agreed upon about the meaning of changing is that the reality of the Earth and the heavens and what is in them on that Day will be the same, except that the system running in them on that Day will be different from the system running in them in this world.

(9) In *Ruh al-maʿānī*, with its chain of narration from Muḥammad b. Muslim, who said: "I heard Imām al-Bāqir say: 'Indeed, God, the Mighty and Majestic, created in the earth, since its inception, seven realms; none among them is from the progeny of Adam. He created them from the soil of the earth and made them dwell therein, one after another, in their realm. Then, God, the Mighty and Majestic, created Adam, the father of humans, and from

him, He created his offspring. By God, the paradise has never been devoid of the souls of the believers since its creation, and neither has the fire been without the souls of the disbelievers and transgressors since its creation, the Mighty and Majestic. Perhaps you would see, on the Day of Resurrection, the bodies of the inhabitants of paradise with their souls in paradise and the bodies of the inhabitants of the fire with their souls in the fire. Is it not that God, the Exalted, is worshiped in His lands, and He does not create beings who worship and single Him out? Indeed, by God, He will surely create beings, without male or female, who worship Him, proclaim His unity and glorify Him. He will create an earth for them that bears them and a sky that shades them. Is it not that God, the Mighty and Majestic, says: "*The day when the earth is transformed into another earth and the heavens* (*as well*)"? And He, the Mighty and Majestic, has also said: "*Have We been exhausted by the first creation? No, they are in doubt about a new creation? Rather, they are in doubt about a new creation*" (Qāf:16).

**Author's comment:** al-ʿAyyāshī narrated in his *tafsīr* from Muḥammad b. Muslim from him: similar to it, and it is different from the meanings that we have mentioned earlier.

(10) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding the verse, "*The day when the earth is transformed into another earth*," it is said that it will be replaced by a white loaf at the position, from which the believers will eat, "And you will see the criminals that day, bound together in shackles," it is said: They will be bound, one to another, "Their garments of liquid pitch," it is said: the garments are the shirt.

(11) In the narration of Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir, regarding the verse, "*their garments made of pitch*," it is the hot melted yellow. Its heat has ended; God, the Mighty and Majestic says, "*and their faces covered by the Fire*," they are garmented with that yellow and their faces covered by the Fire.

**Author's comment:** Meaning, the two sentences, "Their garments made of pitch and their faces covered by the Fire," together indicate that they are covered and enveloped. As for their bodies, they are with pitch, and as for their faces, they are with the Fire.

End of Chapter 14

# Chapter 15

## Sūrah Al-Ḥijr

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate*

### Verses 1-9

#### Introduction to the Sūrah:

This sūrah encompasses discussions about the mockery of the disbelievers towards the Prophet. They accused him of madness and claimed that the Noble Qur'an was the rambling of a madman. In response, the sūrah offers consolation to the Prophet, commanding him to remain patient, steadfast, and forgiving towards them. It aims to uplift his noble spirit, while also serving as a warning and glad tidings.

The sūrah is Meccan, as indicated by its verses. There is a report in *al-Majma'*, from al-Ḥasan, that excludes the verse, "*Certainly We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the great Qur'an*" (15:87) and "*Even as We sent down on the dividers, who reduced the Qur'an into pieces*" (15:90). Further details will follow.

The sūrah also includes the divine instruction: "*So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists.*" This verse aligns with historical accounts stating that the Prophet was discreet about his mission for the first three, four, or five years due to the difficulties he faced. He would only invite specific individuals whom he hoped would embrace faith, doing so in secrecy, until his Lord permitted him to publicly announce his mission.

Supporting this, there are narrations from both Shia and Sunni sources confirming that the Prophet kept his mission secret in the initial years, not revealing it to the public until the revelation of "*So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists. Indeed, We will suffice you against the deriders.*" After this revelation, he came forth and

openly invited people to his mission. Therefore, the sūrah is Meccan and was revealed at the beginning of the public call to faith.

Among the profound Qur'anic verses in this sūrah are: "*And there is not a thing but its treasuries are with Us*" (15:21), and "*Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed, We will preserve it*" (15:9).

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**Commentary:**

الر تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَقُرْآنٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾

(15:1) *Alif, Lam, Ra*. These are the signs of the Book and a manifest Qur'an.

This refers to the noble Qur'anic verses. The term "the Book" in this context means the Qur'an. The indefinite article used for the Qur'an signifies its grandeur and majesty. Additionally, the word "these" in the phrase points to something far-off, thereby emphasizing its exalted status.

The meaning is as follows: "These are the elevated verses, of high standing, which We have revealed to you—verses from the divine Book and from a Qur'an of great significance that distinguishes between truth and falsehood. This is contrary to the claims made by the disbelievers, who accuse you of madness and mock the words of God."

It is also possible that the term "the Book" refers to the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*), as the Qur'an originates from it. The Almighty says, "This is *indeed a noble Qur'an in a guarded Book*"[1] (al-Waqi'ah:77-78). He also says, "*Indeed it is a glorious Quran, in a preserved tablet*" (al-Burūj:21-22).

Therefore, the phrase "*These are the signs of the Book and a manifest Qur'an*" serves as a summary of the verse, "*By the manifest Book: We have made it into an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason*" (al-Zukhrūf:1-3).

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رُبَمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

(15:2) Much will the faithless wish that they had been Muslims.

This verse serves as a precursor to what they will subsequently assert

1 Or, "Preserved Tablet." (Ed.)

when they say to the Prophet: "*O you, to whom the reminder has been sent down, you are indeed crazy*" (15:6). This indicates their impending regret over their current state of disbelief, and their yearning for Islam for the sake of God and faith in His Book, at a time when there will be no avenue for them to achieve this.

Regarding the phrase: "*Much will the faithless wish,*" what is intended is the sentiment of longing, not an unqualified fondness or love. Evidence of this is in His elaboration: "*that they had been Muslims.*" The words "*that they had*" suggest that their yearning is one of longing, and that they desire Islam in reflection upon their past circumstances, which they missed and can never return to. Thus, there is no alternative but Islam as long as they remain in this world.

The verse highlights that those who disbelieve will come to regret their disbelief, wishing they had embraced Islam once the tapestry of this worldly life folds up.

ذَرْهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(15:3) Leave them to eat and enjoy and to be diverted by longings. Soon they will know.

The term 'diversion' suggests being sidetracked or consumed. It's often expressed as: "He was diverted by one thing from another," implying he was so engrossed in it that he overlooked the latter.

The statement, "*Leave them to eat and enjoy and to be diverted,*" is a command to let them persist in their falsehood, subtly discouraging any engagement in debates or presenting evidence to them. This suggests that a day will come when they'll deeply regret not being Muslims, but by then, it will be too late. The phrase "Soon they will know" elucidates the rationale behind this command, emphasizing the futility of arguments and disputes. Essentially, there's no need for such confrontations, as they will inevitably recognize the truth in its undeniable clarity.

The verse subtly conveys to them that their primary pursuits in life are merely eating and indulging in worldly pleasures, coupled with being distracted by fleeting hopes and dreams. Their rationale aligns more with beasts and other speechless creatures. Given this, it's only fitting to distance oneself from them and their views, refraining from presenting them with profound arguments rooted in sound intellect and human reasoning.

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَعْلُومٌ ﴿٤﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

(15:4-5) We did not destroy any town but that it had a known term. No nation can advance its time nor can it defer it.

These (two) verses serve to affirm and emphasize the preceding verse where it states, "*Soon they will know*." According to the context and underlying meaning, this signals that people will not embrace Islam in this worldly life. Rather, they will desire to convert only after their appointed time has passed and their doom has occurred. In this regard, individuals have no free will; instead, every community has a known book (of record) with God, detailing their predetermined lifespan. Neither can they hasten it nor delay it by a single moment.

Furthermore, these verses imply that each nation, like each individual, has a designated record. As God states: *We have attached every person's omen to his neck, and We shall bring it out for him on the Day of Resurrection as a book that he will find wide open* (al-Isrā':13).

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٦﴾

(15:6) They said, 'O you, to whom the Reminder has been sent down, you are indeed crazy.'

Their words deviate from the tone of mockery.[1] Hence, they addressed the Prophet not by his name but by the characteristic of receiving the Reminder, in line with his claim. Their use of the passive voice highlights their ignorance of the origin of this revelation and reflects their lack of faith and trust in the Prophet's assertion that it is God who revealed it. The description "*to whom the Reminder has been sent down*," and the term "Reminder," are both intended to mock, just as their statement "*you are indeed crazy*" aims to discredit and falsify his claims.

1 Editor's note: In other words, this choice of words could indicate a certain level of hesitancy or uncertainty on their part about the source of the revelation, thus giving the speech a tone that doesn't entirely align with a straightforward attempt to mock or belittle the Prophet.

لَوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٧﴾

(15:7) 'Why do you not bring us the angels should you be truthful?!'

This employs a form of provocation. The usage of "why do you not" (*law mā*) here can be likened to saying "why wouldn't you," (*hallā*) serving to stimulate or challenge the listener. Essentially, it asks, "If your claim of prophethood is genuine, then why not summon the angels as witnesses to validate your message?" This line of questioning closely parallels another verse, "*Why has an angel not been sent down to him so that he may be a warner with him*" (al-Furqan:7).

The rationale behind their demand for angels stems from their perception of humanity as purely material, mired in the vices of lust and anger. They can't conceive a link between the human world and the celestial realm of pure light and purity. Therefore, they argue that anyone claiming a connection to that spiritual world must bring forth its inhabitants, namely the noble angels, to corroborate his claims and support his mission.

However, it's important to note that in the belief system of the idolaters, angels serve as deities subordinate to God. Thus, their call for monotheism indirectly argues that these lesser gods have no role in intercession or worship, except by God's decree. If this is true, as they seem to acknowledge, then the angels should descend to validate and support the prophetic claim.[1]

مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوا إِذًا مُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٨﴾

(15:8) We do not send down the angels except with due reason, and then they will not be granted any respite.

This serves as a reply to those who suggested to the Prophet that he produce angels as proof of his truthfulness. The core message here is that

1 Editor's note: When these idolaters call for proof in the form of angels, they are inadvertently invoking their own system of belief where angels have a specific status as lesser gods. The implication here is somewhat paradoxical: By demanding angels as proof, they are also implicitly accepting the framework of monotheism—that there is a greater deity (*Allah*) who has control over these lesser gods (the angels).

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the Divine Will operates in such a way that His angels remain hidden from human view, shrouded in the realm of the Unseen. Were these angels to be revealed upon their request, it would constitute an extraordinary, celestial sign, breaking the usual norms, descending due to their own proposition. Following the appearance of such a miraculous sign, prompted by human demand, Divine punishment—eradication and utter ruin—would inevitably ensue if they fail to believe. Given that these staunch disbelievers are unlikely to embrace faith, their doom would be sealed.

In summary, if God were to send down angels under these circumstances—where people are requesting a decisive, irrefutable sign to manifest the truth—He would dispatch them with an unequivocal truth that leaves no room for doubt. Following this, they would not be given any more time; rather, their destruction would be immediate and complete. This captures the essence of what some (commentators) have discussed on the subject.

Another view suggests that "with the truth" in the verse refers to death. The implication is that angels descend only in association with the inescapable truth that is death, and thereafter, there would be no delay. This seems to echo God's words, "*The day when they see the angels, there will be no good news for the guilty that day*" (al-Furqān:22).

It is also said that "with the truth" signifies the Divine message. That is, angels are dispatched solely for the purpose of revelation and prophetic communication. This appears to align with verses like "*The Messenger has certainly brought you the truth*" (al-Nisa':170), and "*They have certainly denied the truth when it came to them*" (al-An'ām:5).

Various perspectives are discussed in the exegesis of the verse, alongside others that appear in different explanations. While each provides some insight, it's important to note that none of them fits neatly into the constraint implied by the phrase, "*We do not send down the angels except with due reason*." The descent of the angels is not limited solely to the enactment of Divine punishment or eradication, nor is it confined merely to the realm of death, or solely to delivering revelations and messages. Assigning one of the three aforementioned interpretations to "with due reason" (or, *with the truth*) would necessitate imposing various limitations, which are effectively negated by the broader, more inclusive tone of the verse itself, as is evident to anyone who reviews the accepted interpretations.

It's possible to interpret the meaning of the verse through

contemplation of other verses, suggesting that our material existence—our life in this world—is a complex interplay of truth and falsehood. Truth doesn't manifest in its fullness, with all its attributes and consequences, as underscored by the Qur'anic phrase, "*This is how Allah compares the truth and falsehood*" (al-Ra'd:17). This has been discussed in detail before. In such an environment, any manifestation of truth is also prone to elements of ambiguity and doubt, which is corroborated by our life experiences. Another supporting point is the Qur'anic verse, "*Had We made him an angel, We would have surely made him a man, and We would have surely confounded them just as they confound* (*the truth now*)" (al-An'ām:9).

Life serves as a trial and a realm of choices; these choices exist precisely because of the potential for blurring the lines between truth and falsehood, and between good and evil. This sets the stage for humans to find themselves at the crossroads of divergent paths, discerning good from evil through their respective indicators (or signs) and outcomes, and then making a choice that leads to either happiness or misery.

Concerning the realm of angels and their existential state, it is a realm of pure truth, untainted by any falsehood. This is evidenced by the Qur'anic verses: "*Over which are* (*assigned*) *angels, severe and mighty, who do not disobey whatever Allah has commanded them, and carry out what they are commanded*" (al-Taḥrīm:6) and "*Rather they are* (*His*) *honored servants. They do not venture to speak ahead of Him, and they act by His command*" (al-Anbiyā':26-27).

The verses imply that the angels are distinguished beings: noble and radiant, untainted by deficiencies or imperfections. They stand beyond the realm of evil, misery, corruption, and disobedience. Hence, the material framework, built upon choices, probabilities, and the spectrum of right and wrong, obedience and defiance, joy and sorrow, is not applicable to them. A more comprehensive discussion on this subject will follow, God willing.

In the subsequent discussions, it will be highlighted that as long as humans are submerged in the material world and its allurements, similar to the disbelievers and those astray, they cannot attain the realm of pure truth. The sole pathway to this understanding is by transitioning from their current state to the realm of absolute truth, where obscurities are unveiled as indicated by the verse: *You were certainly oblivious of this. We*

*have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today*" (Qaf:22). In the human perspective, this realm is identified as the Hereafter.[1]

The appearance of the angelic realm to humans immersed in the material world is contingent on a change in circumstance—essentially, the transition from this life to the afterlife, which is death. However, exceptions exist among God's chosen servants and purified allies who are free from the stains of sin and are close to His divine presence. These individuals possess the ability to perceive the unseen even while existing in the physical world, like the Prophets (peace be upon them).

Perhaps what we're highlighting aligns with "*We do not send down the angels except with due reason, and then they will not be granted any respite.*" The plea for the angels to descend was a desire to witness them in their true forms as a testament to belief. However, such a vision is only possible after death as God stated: "*Those who do not expect to encounter Us say, 'Why have angels not been sent down to us, or why do we not see our Lord?' Certainly they are full of arrogance within their souls and have become terribly defiant. The day when they see the angels, there will be no good news for the guilty that day, and they will say, 'Keep away* (*from paradise*)*!' Then we shall attend to the works they have done and then turn them into scattered dust*" (al-Furqān:21-23).

This dual meaning is also present in the verse: "*Had We made him an angel, We would have surely made him a man, and We would have surely confounded them just as they confound* (*the truth now*)" (al-'An`ām:9). This means that if angels were sent down as miraculous signs confirming prophethood, it would necessitate divine judgment upon the people. Similarly, if an angel were assigned prophethood, he would have to be portrayed as a human being, capable of being misunderstood or doubted. This is because divine testing and tribulation require the possibility of both success and failure, salvation and doom.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

1 Editor's note: Being "engrossed in this material world" implies a focus on worldly desires and distractions that can cloud spiritual insight. The verse quoted by the author from Sūrah Qaf highlights the moment these veils lift, granting clear vision in the Hereafter, emphasizing the fleeting nature of worldly life against the eternal reality beyond.

(15:9) Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it.

This verse emphasizes exclusivity (*ikhtiṣāṣ*), particularly in response to those who rejected the Qur'an, describing it as mere delusions or denouncing the Prophet as mad. They implied that his message and creation were meaningless. By demanding the descent of angels, they sought validation of the Prophets call about Qur'an's authenticity and its status as a true heavenly book.

The meaning—and God knows best—is that this Reminder wasn't brought by the Prophet from his own accord. Thus, adversaries cannot undermine or counteract it with obstinacy. The Prophet isn't burdened with its preservation, nor does it stem from angels requiring their affirmation. Instead, We have gradually revealed this Reminder, overseeing its preservation given its inherent nature as a Reminder coupled with Our profound protection.

The Reminder (that is, the Qur'an) is living and eternal, safeguarded from death and oblivion from its origin. It's shielded from any additions that would compromise its essence as a Reminder, likewise from any reductions. It's also preserved from any alterations in its form and arrangement that would change its characteristic as a divine Reminder, elucidating the realities of His wisdom.

The verse indicates that God's Book is safeguarded from any alterations in its entirety, as it serves as a divine Reminder. Consequently, it stands as a living and enduring Reminder.

A comparable verse indicating that the revered Book is divinely protected, free from any tampering or changes, being a *Reminder* from God, states: "*Indeed those who defy the Reminder when it comes to them. Indeed it is an august Book: falsehood cannot approach it, from before it nor from behind it,* (*gradually*) *sent down* (*revelation*) *from One all-wise, all-laudable*" (Fussilat:41-42).

From prior discussions, it becomes evident that the particles "*alif*" and "*lam*" in the "Reminder" (*al-dhikr*) pertains to the covenant of remembrance. The term "guardians" in this context denotes a sense of reception, as inferred from the active participle form. This clarification addresses potential claims suggesting that if the verse implied the Qur'an's immunity to distortion due to its status as a *Reminder*, the same would apply to

the Torah and the Gospel, given that they too are regarded as *Reminders*. However, the divine discourse clearly acknowledges the presence of distortions in both these texts.[1]

With the context of the verse in focus, it underscores the eternal preservation of the *Reminder*, which refers to the Qur'an, post its divine revelation. The verse doesn't suggest any elevated status of the *Reminder* in terms of divine protection but keeps the emphasis squarely on its content and significance.

Further insights on this matter will be explored, God willing.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, with his chain of narration from his father, from Ibn Abī 'Umayr, from 'Umar b. Udhayna, from Rafā'a, from Imām al-Ṣādiq who said: "On the Day of Resurrection, a caller will announce from the side of God: 'None shall enter Paradise except a Muslim.' On that day, those who disbelieved will wish they had been Muslims. He then recited: "*Leave them to eat and enjoy and to be diverted by longings* (by their activities). *Soon they will know*" (15:3).

**Author's Comment:** A similar narration about the commentary of this verse has been reported by al-'Ayyāshī, on the authority of 'Aṭā' al-Makkī, from both Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(2) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* and Ibn Mardawayh with a sound chain of narration reported from Jābir b. 'Abd Allah who said: The Messenger of God stated: "There will be people from my community who will be punished for their sins, and they will remain in Hellfire as long as God wills. The polytheists will mock them, saying, 'We do not see any benefit from your belief.' No believer will remain except that God Almighty will eventually remove him from the Hellfire. The Messenger of God then recited: "*Much will the faithless wish that they had been Muslims.*"

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1 Editor's note: While all three texts—the Qur'an, the Torah, and the Gospel—are divine Reminders, only the Qur'an is highlighted for its unique preservation, emphasizing its distinct status amidst recognized distortions in both the other scriptures.

**Author's Comment:** This same meaning has been reported in various ways on the authority of Abū Mūsā al-Ashaʿrī, Abū Saʿīd al-Khuḍrī, and Anas b. Mālik from the Messenger of God.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn al-Shāhīn's *Sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-sunnah*, on the authority of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib who said: The Messenger of God said: "Indeed, those who commit major sins from the monotheists of all nations, who die upon their major sins without remorse or repentance, if they enter Hellfire, their eyes will not turn blue, their faces will not turn black, they will not be chained with the devils, they won't be shackled with chains, they won't drink boiling water, and they won't wear pitch. God has forbidden their bodies from eternal damnation due to monotheism and protected them from the fire because of their prostration. Among them, some will have the fire reaching their feet, some to their heels, some to their thighs, some to their waists, and some to their necks, depending on their sins and deeds. Some will remain in it for a month and then be taken out, some for a year and then be taken out, and the longest stay will be equivalent to the duration of the worldly life from the day it was created to the day it ends. When God wishes to remove them from it, the Jews, Christians, and others in Hellfire from other religions will say to the monotheists in Hellfire: 'You believed in God, His Books, and His Messengers, yet today we and you are the same in the fire.' At that point, God's displeasure with them will be unparalleled, and He will move them from the fire to a spring between Heaven and the Path. They will grow there like the plants that grow rapidly in a torrent's residue. Afterward, they will enter Paradise with an inscription on their foreheads: 'These are the inmates of Hell, freed by the Merciful.' They will reside in Paradise as long as God wills. Then, they will ask God Almighty to erase that inscription from their foreheads. God will send an angel to erase it. Then God will send angels with nails of fire who will seal those who remain in Hell with those nails. God will then forget them beside His Throne, and the inhabitants of Paradise will be preoccupied with their bounties and pleasures. This is what is meant by the verse: *Much will the faithless wish that they*

*had been Muslims.*

**Author's Comment:** al-Tarthūth is a plant, and *ḥamīl al-sayl* refers to its residue carried by the torrent. Narrations from the Shiite sources have been reported that are close in meaning to this tradition.

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ahmad and Ibn Mardawaih narrate from Abū Saʿīd al-Khuḍrī that the Messenger of God planted a stick in front of him, another beside him, and another behind him. He asked, "Do you know what this is?" They replied, "God and His Messenger know best." He said, "This stick represents the human, the one beside him signifies his lifespan, and the one behind him represents his hopes. Man pursues his hopes, but his lifespan interrupts it before he realizes." I say: A narration with a similar meaning has also been conveyed through different chains from Anas.

**Author's Comment:** A similar narration has also been reported on the authority of Anas from the Messenger of God.

(5) In *Majmaʾ al-bayyān al-bayān*, from Amīr al-Muʾminīn, he said, "The two things I fear most for you are following desires and long hopes, for following desires prevents you from the truth, and long hopes make you forget the Hereafter."

(6) And in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding His saying, "*We do not send down the angels except in truth, and they would not be given any respite*" he said, "If we were to send down the angels, they would not be given any respite and they would be destroyed."

## An Excursus on the Qur'an being Immune to Distortion (In Seven Sections)

### Section One

Approximately fourteen centuries ago, the Arabian Prophet named Muḥammad declared his prophethood and embarked on his mission. This invitation was accepted by a group comprising both Arabs and non-Arabs. He presented a book, attributed to his Lord, which he named the Qur'an. This book articulated various teachings and the foundational tenets of the Divine Law to which he called people. He used the Qur'an as a testament to his mission, referring to it as a sign of his prophethood. It's an established historical truth that the Qur'an in our possession today is the very same one

the Prophet brought forth and recited to his contemporaries. This implies that the text of the Qur'an has remained unaltered; it was never replaced by another, be it in a similar or different style, and then later circulated as the original Qur'an revealed to the Prophet. Only someone with impaired understanding could doubt this veracity. All scholars who have researched the topic of the distortion of the Qur'an, regardless of their stance, haven't considered such a drastic alteration.

The only variations these scholars have contemplated involve minor adjustments—perhaps an added or omitted sentence or verse, or slight changes in wording or diacritics. Nevertheless, they unanimously agree that the core of the Qur'an has been preserved since the Prophet's time, with nothing added or omitted.

Furthermore, the Qur'an showcases distinct qualities across all its verses. The version we have today embodies the attributes it professes to possess, and none of these characteristics have been modified or lost. The Qur'an also challenges humanity with its eloquence. The style exhibited in our current version is exceptionally magnificent. This unparalleled style surpasses all known speeches from the most eloquent Arabs, whether in poetry, prose, speeches, letters, dialogues, or other forms. Such a style is consistently present throughout its verses.

The Qur'an also poses a challenge, asserting its consistency through the verse: "*Do they not contemplate the Qur'an? Had it been from* (*someone*) *other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it*" (al-Nisa':82). That which we have received perfectly embodies this claim. Should there be any ambiguity or perceived flaw in a verse, another verse will elucidate it. In essence, what might seem a,s inconsistencies or contradictions at an initial glance are expounded upon elsewhere in the book.

The Qur'an presents various challenges, some of which are comprehensible even to those who are not fluent in Arabic. For instance, it declares: "*Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another'*" (al-Isrā':88). And again: "*It is indeed a decisive word, and it is not a jest*" (al-Ṭāriq:13-14). The rendition of the Qur'an we have today lucidly conveys the truth, leaving no space for doubt. It guides us to the pinnacle of understanding—be it the fundamentals of genuine knowledge, the overarching tenets of natural law, or the nuances of moral virtue. In its teachings, we find no

inadequacies, contradictions, or errors. Every tenet aligns with the unifying spirit of monotheism, which serves as the foundational principle all Qur'anic teachings return to, whether examined individually or collectively.

Furthermore, the Qur'an is rich with narratives of past prophets and their communities. The version available to us today narrates these accounts in a manner that aligns with pure faith, emphasizing the revered status of prophethood and the prophets' unwavering devotion. When juxtaposing the Qur'anic tales of prophets with their counterparts in the Old and New Testament, it becomes evident that the Qur'an portrays them in the most dignified manner.

The Qur'an contains numerous verses that speak of future battles and events. The version of the Qur'an we have today confirms these prophecies. The Qur'an also describes itself with various admirable attributes. It is referred to as a light and a guide leading to the straight path and fostering a righteous community. Indeed, the version we have in our hands today embodies all these characteristics, offering comprehensive guidance.

One of the most significant attributes that the Qur'an ascribes to itself is being a "reminder of God." It serves as God's perpetual and living sign. Through its verses, it elucidates His beautiful names, His sublime attributes, the method of His creation, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and His decrees. The Qur'an details the culmination of creation, including the resurrection and everything's return to God. It discusses the eventual outcomes of souls, whether in success or despair, and elaborates on the intricacies of heaven and hell. All these elements remind us of God, mirroring how the Qur'an serves as a reminder with its definitive truths. The version we possess today encompasses all these facets of being a divine reminder.

"Remembrance" (*dhikr*) is one of the most encompassing descriptions of the Qur'an's role. Hence, it's referred to as the Reminder in verses highlighting its protection from falsehood, alteration, and distortion. For instance, the verse states, "*Indeed those who commit sacrilege in Our signs are not hidden from Us. Is someone who is cast in the Fire better off, or someone who arrives safely on the Day of Resurrection? Act as you wish; indeed He sees best what you do. Indeed those who defy the Reminder when it comes to them. Indeed it is an august Book: falsehood cannot approach it, from before it nor from behind it,* (*gradually*) *sent down* (*revelation*) *from One all-wise,*

*all-laudable*" (Fussilat:40-42). This emphasizes that falsehood cannot infiltrate the Qur'an, be it through refutation, replacement, alteration, or distortion. Any of these would invalidate its attribute as a reminder. The Qur'an is also termed the Reminder in another verse discussing its preservation: "*Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it*" (15:9). This asserts that God has safeguarded the Qur'an from any change, be it in wording or sequence, ensuring it always serves as a reminder of Him.

Some have mistakenly assumed that the pronoun "it" in the previously mentioned verse refers to the Prophet. However, this interpretation lacks a solid foundation. The context of the verse itself contradicts such a viewpoint. The disbelievers ridiculed the Prophet primarily due to the Qur'an, which he asserted was revealed to him by God. This sentiment is echoed in a verse we've previously discussed: "*They said, 'O you, to whom the Reminder has been sent down, you are indeed crazy*'" (15:6).

From what we've detailed, it's clear that the Qur'an, which God revealed to His Prophet, and described as a preserved *dhikr* (reminder), remains intact. It is divinely shielded against any additions, subtractions, or alterations, just as God promised His Prophet.

In conclusion, the Qur'an was sent down by God to His Prophet and is characterized in many verses with specific qualities. If any of these characteristics were altered—whether through addition, subtraction, or a change in wording or sequence—it would undoubtedly affect that particular attribute. However, the Qur'an we have with us fully embodies these described attributes in the best possible way. There has been no distortion that deprives it of any of its qualities. The Qur'an we possess is the very one revealed to the Prophet. If we assume a verse was omitted or a change in grammar, letter, or sequence occurred, it must be in a manner that does not affect any of its qualities, such as its inimitability, superiority over other divine scriptures, guidance, luminosity, and its nature as a *dhikr* (reminder). This could be, for example, a repetitive verse being omitted or a minor difference in a dot or inflection, and the like.

## Section Two

There are many narrations from the Prophet, transmitted through both Shīʿah and Sunnī channels, that instruct us to refer to the Qur'an

during times of confusion and to resolve dilemmas. These narrations affirm the absence of any distortion in the Qur'an.

Furthermore, the frequently cited "Hadith of the two weighty things" (Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn), found in both Shīʿah and Sunnī traditions, says, "I am leaving among you two momentous things: the Book of God and my progeny, my Ahl al-Bayt. If you cling to both of them, you will never be led astray after me." This hadith would be rendered meaningless if it were advising us to adhere to a distorted book, as following such a book could not prevent misguidance.

There are also numerous narrations from both the Prophet and the Imāms emphasizing the need to cross-reference other narrations with the Qur'an. Some have mistakenly assumed that these narrations pertain solely to jurisprudential matters, suggesting that only verses related to legal rulings are free from distortion. Yet this notion is dispelled by the general wording of those narrations, which mandate us to validate other reports against the Qur'an. It is baseless to impose a specific interpretation without supporting evidence.

Additionally, the phrasing of these narrations is explicit, or nearly so, in stating that the aim of comparing the narrations with the Qur'an is to discern the genuine from the fabricated. It is acknowledged that not only jurisprudential narrations were tampered with. In fact, there were stronger motives to interfere with narrations concerning beliefs, the tales of previous prophets and nations, and the descriptions of creation's beginning and end. This is corroborated by the presence of fabricated reports drawn from Jewish traditions (*al-Isrā'īlīyāt*) and other similar sources, which primarily delve into these subjects rather than jurisprudential matters.

Moreover, the reports that depict the Imāms citing various Qur'anic verses on diverse topics align with the Qur'an available to us today. This holds true even for those accounts that discuss the distortion of the Qur'an. Such reports strongly suggest that many of these references to distortion are, in fact, emphasizing the distinction between mere narration and authentic revelation. Moreover, commentary has been provided in line with the revelation, maintaining its depth and profound interpretation.

Furthermore, we have accounts from the Imāms stating that the Qur'an in the hands of the people today is indeed the divine revelation from God. This is despite the fact that its sequence differs from the arrangement

made by Imām ʿAlī in his personal compilation. Additionally, Imām ʿAlī did not contribute to its official assembly during the tenure of Abu Bakr and ʿUthmān. In this context, they have guided their Shia saying, "Recite the Qur'an as the people do."

These narrations suggest that if the current version of the Qur'an varies from what Imām ʿAlī compiled, the differences lie only in the sequencing of the chapters or the arrangement of specific verses. Such variations do not alter the inherent meaning or the divine attributes ascribed to the Qur'an by God.

In conclusion, despite the variations in these accounts, they collectively and unequivocally affirm that the Qur'an we have today is the very same revelation bestowed upon the Prophet. It remains intact in its noble qualities, influences, and blessings.[1]

## Section Three

A group from the hadith scholars of the Shīʿah, the Sunnīs, and the Ḥashwiyyah held the view that the Qur'an underwent distortion. This meant there were omissions and alterations in its phrasing or sequence. However, they unanimously agreed that nothing was added to it. In fact, no Muslim is known to have claimed any additions to it.

The consensus among the Muslim ummah is that the Qur'an is free from any additions. Nevertheless, various arguments have been presented suggesting that omissions and changes occurred within the Qur'an.

**The First Argument:** Numerous accounts are found in both Shīʿah and Sunnī sources. These accounts allude to some sūrahs, verses, sentences, words, and even letters that were omitted from the Qur'an. These omissions reportedly happened during the first official compilation of the Qur'an under Abū Bakr's reign, and again during the second compilation

1 Editor's note: This section of the discourse emphasizes the Qur'an's undistorted authenticity. Central is the "Hadith of the two weighty things," which highlights the significance of the Qur'an and the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt. Narrations encourage cross-referencing with the Qur'an to discern true from fabricated accounts, covering more than just legal aspects. While the sequence of the Qur'an might differ from Imām ʿAlī's version, its core meaning remains unaltered. In essence, today's Qur'an faithfully mirrors the divine revelation given to the Prophet.

under ʿUthmān's rule. In Shīʿah sources, these accounts number over two thousand. Noteworthy Sunnī hadith collections like Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim, Sunan al-Nasāʾī, and Musnad of Aḥmad also mention them. Moreover, these accounts are referenced in *tafsīr* works, with al-Ālūsī highlighting the sheer volume of such narrations in his tafsīr.

However, these narrations do not refer to the discrepancies between ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd's personal copy and today's Uthmanic codex, which differs in over sixty places. They don't discuss the thirty-plus variations between Ubayy b. Kaʿb's personal copy and the Uthmanic codex either. Nor do they touch upon the differences in the Uthmanic codices that were dispatched to Mecca, the Levant, Basra, Kufa, Yemen, and Bahrain, with one copy preserved in Medina. Variations in these codices ranged from forty-five to fifty letters, depending on the source.

These discussions also don't encompass the chapter sequence discrepancies between the Uthmanic codex and the one from Abū Bakr's era. In the earlier codex, Sūrah al-Anfāl was classified among the repeating chapters (*al-mathānī*), and Sūrah al-Barāʾah among the longer chapters (those with a hundred verses or more, termed *al-maʾīn*). However, both are listed among the lengthy chapters (*al-ṭiwāl*) in the Uthmanic Codex. Details on this will be explored in upcoming accounts.

Furthermore, they aren't addressing the chapter sequence differences between the personal copies of ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd and Ubayy b. Kaʿb and the Uthmanic codex. They also aren't pointing out the variations in the rare Qur'anic recitations from the Companions and the Followers, which might sum up to a thousand or more.

**The Second Argument:** It's unreasonable to believe that the Qur'an would remain free of omissions and changes, especially when compiled by fallible individuals. Naturally, this version they assembled might not align perfectly with the true Qur'an as revealed to the Prophet.

**The Third Argument:** Narratives from both the general populace (*al-ʾāmmah*) and the specific sect (*al-khāṣṣah*) state that after the Prophet's passing, ʿAlī distanced himself from the masses. He only emerged for the congregational prayer, during which time he compiled the Qur'an. Upon completion, he presented it to the people, clarifying that it was the very Qur'an God had revealed to His Prophet and which he had gathered. Yet, the people declined it, considering their possession of the codex compiled

by Zayd b. Thābit sufficient. If no discrepancies existed between ʿAlī's personal copy and Zayd b. Thābit's codex, there would be no rationale for ʿAlī to offer it to the public and advocate for it. Undoubtedly, ʿAlī was the most knowledgeable about the Qur'an after the Prophet. This is emphasized in the widely narrated Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn and the unanimously accepted saying, "ʿAlī is with the truth, and the truth is with ʿAlī."

**The Fourth Argument:** Various narrations suggest that the events befalling the Children of Israel will similarly affect this nation, following in their footsteps precisely. The Qur'an and the narrations clearly indicate that the Children of Israel altered their prophet's book. Hence, it is inevitable that this Ummah will similarly modify their divine scripture, the Qur'an.

In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, a narration from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī recounts the Messenger of God saying, "You will tread the path of those before you, mirroring their steps so closely that if they entered a lizard's burrow, you would do likewise." The listeners inquired, "O Messenger of God, are you referring to the Jews and the Christians?" He responded, "Who else?" This extensive narration, with minor variances in wording, is prevalent in the Sunni hadith compilations from various companions.

A version of this narration, abundant in Shīʿah works from the Imāms and the Prophet, conveys the Prophet saying, "You will follow the path of the preceding nations precisely, not surpassing them by even a span or a cubit. Even if they entered a lizard's den, you would emulate them." The listeners asked, "O Messenger of God, are you indicating the Jews and Christians?" He answered, "Who else am I referencing? You will dismantle the principles of Islam, piece by piece. The first you will forsake is trust, and the last will be prayer."

Response to the Argument of Consensus: Their claim of a unanimous agreement among the Muslim community regarding the Qur'an's protection from any form of alteration (like additions) is flawed due to its circular reasoning.

Clarification: The concept of consensus (*ijmāʿ*) is not inherently a logical or definitive argument. It serves primarily as a jurisprudential justification for those who recognize it. If it holds any weight in matters of belief, it can only give rise to conjecture (*ẓann*). This holds true regardless of whether such consensus arises from thorough scrutiny or is based on others' testimonies. Some mistakenly argue that consensus derived from

comprehensive analysis assures certainty in matters of belief. We counter this by stating that it merely reinforces conjecture. This is because such consensus collates the understanding derived from individual statements. Each of these, when considered separately, only fosters conjecture in comprehending the truth. The addition of one aligned statement to another only bolsters conjecture and does not culminate in certainty. Certainty is a distinct, uncomplicated belief, unlike conjecture, which cannot be merely a conglomeration of several conjectural statements.

However, it's undeniable that amalgamating such statements augments the conjecture's robustness, pushing it closer to certainty without achieving it. This debunks the idea that a consensus derived by meticulously examining each statement guarantees certainty in beliefs. Shifting focus to the consensus relayed by a few scholars, it's evident that this form of consensus can at best lead to conjecture, akin to infrequently reported traditions, which at most induce conjecture.

Consequently, consensus is merely a legal validation evoking conjecture. For Sunnīs, its validation as a legal proof lies in the Prophet's narration: "My nation will not unanimously err or be misled." For the Shīʿah, it's validated because a consensus would inherently reflect the view of the infallible or disclose the infallible's stance.

Ultimately, the credibility of consensus as a pivotal argument hinges on the veracity of prophethood. It's evident that the authenticity of prophethood relies on the Qur'an remaining unaltered, preserving its attributes like guidance, decisiveness, and its miraculous nature. The Qur'an, as a miracle, stands as the sole enduring testament to the Prophet's divine mission. If the Qur'an were susceptible to modifications—whether additions, deletions, or alterations—it would undermine verses that proclaim it as God's unadulterated word. This would, in turn, invalidate it as evidence of the Prophet's divine commission. If the Qur'an ceases to be a credible proof, the validity of consensus as an argument would also falter.

Merely affirming that our current version encompasses the genuine Qur'an doesn't negate potential modifications in its verses. Hence, our initial assertion that the book we possess today undoubtedly represents the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet doesn't pertain to this discourse.

**Response to the first argument:** The initial argument attempted to demonstrate that the Qur'an had experienced alterations and additions

through various narrations.

Firstly, relying on such narrations as legal proof becomes a circular argument, akin to how basing an argument on the consensus of the Muslim community can be. These narrations can be trusted only based on their transmission chains and the historical contexts they appear in. Notably, none of these narrations are widely reported (*tawātur*), nor do they have definitive evidence compelling their acceptance. They are isolated, scattered narrations with discrepancies amongst themselves. Concerning their transmission chains, some are deemed authentic while others are seen as weak. Also, many of these narrations hardly suggest that the Qur'an has been altered. It's exceptionally rare to find a narration on this topic that, without a doubt, is authentic in its transmission and conveys such an idea.

Furthermore, it's important to remember that these infrequent narrations can be susceptible to fabrication and modification. Without a doubt, many fabricated stories, such as the *isrā'īlīyāt*, have infiltrated our hadith sources. Many narrations have also been manipulated or tampered with. Hence, a narration vulnerable to fabrication or alteration is not deemed a credible source.

We are also aware that these narrations sometimes mention verses and chapters that don't mirror the Qur'an's style, and at times, even contradict the Qur'an.

Previously, we noted that most of these narrations have weak transmission chains. We know this because their transmission chains either don't directly trace back to the infallible (they are *mursal*) or are inherently weak. It's a rarity to find narrations on this topic without these transmission issues.

We also highlighted that many of these narrations inadequately demonstrate that the Qur'an has been altered, as they often contain distorted quotations of verses used to explain other verses. For instance, there's a narration from Imām ʿAlī that references a verse as an explanation: They are the ones whom God knows as to what is in their hearts. So let them alone (since the decree of them being miserable and their punishment has already been passed) and speak to them concerning themselves far-reaching words (al-Nisa':63). Another narration from Imām al-Ṣādiq quotes a verse as an explanation: If you distort (the command) or disregard (what you have been ordered towards), God is indeed well aware of what you do

(al-Nisa':135). Many narrations explaining verses are mistakenly classified as supporting the idea of Qur'anic distortion.

Moreover, numerous narrations hinting at the reason a particular verse was revealed are wrongly grouped with narrations suggesting the Qur'an's distortion. An example includes narrations quoting the verse: O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you (about Imām ʿAlī, al-Ma'idah:67) because it was revealed regarding him. Another narration recounts a group from the Banū Tamīm tribe shouting outside the Prophet's room, "Come out!" The subsequent verse is cited as: Indeed those who call you from behind the apartments, (Banū Tamīm), most of them do not apply reason (al-Ḥujurāt:4). Incorrectly, it was believed that the mention of Banū Tamīm was initially part of the verse but was later omitted.

Numerous narrations about the applications of Qur'anic verses are mistakenly grouped with those concerning the distortion of the Qur'an. For instance, one narration mentions the verse as: And the wrongdoers (who deprived the progeny of Muḥammad of their rightful status) will come to know (al-Naml:227). Another narration cites the verse as: Whoever obeys God and His Apostle (in matters of guardianship of ʿAlī and subsequent Imāms) has truly achieved immense success (al-Aḥzāb: 71). There are several more narrations of this kind.

Additionally, certain narrations detail the invocations and supplications to be recited after specific Qur'anic sections. These have been mistakenly considered as removed parts of the Qur'an, as seen in narrations that discuss the subject of Qur'an distortion. For instance, a narration cites ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Muhtadī saying: "I inquired from (Imām) al-Riḍā about monotheism." The Imām responded, "Whoever recites Sūrah al-Tawḥīd and believes in its message truly understands monotheism." ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz then asked, "How should it be recited?" The Imām said, "Recite as the masses do, but append the phrase: 'thus is the nature of my Lord.'"

Furthermore, some narrations believed to hint at Qur'an distortion are those with varying wordings for a single verse. For instance, some describe the verse as: Indeed, God assisted you at Badr when you were humbled (Āl ʿImrān:123). Other versions present it as: God assisted you at Badr when you were weak, while yet others suggest: God assisted you at Badr when you were few in number. Often, these variances provide context, indicating

they are explanatory notes on the verse's meaning. This is evident from narrations concerning the above verse, further substantiated by some narrations that assert, "Describing them as humbled isn't fitting while the Prophet was among them."

However, sometimes such narrations are merely conflicting reports which should be disregarded. An example is the Shīʿah and Sunnī sources' mentions of the so-called "verse of stoning" (*āyat al-rajm*), where various versions of this purported verse exist. These narrations offer several variations of this supposed verse:

(1) "If an old man and old woman commit adultery, then stone them both at once, for they both followed their desires."
(2) "An old man and old woman, when they commit adultery, stone them both at once because they followed their desires."
(3) "An old man and an old woman, when they commit adultery, stone them both at once due to the pleasure they pursued."
(4) One variation includes the phrase: "an exemplary punishment from God and God is All-Knowing and Wise."
(5) Another ends with the phrase: "an exemplary punishment from God and God is Almighty and All-Wise."

Another example of this is the narrations about the "verse of the chair" (*Āyat al-Kursī*). Some narrations have mentioned the verse in the following manner: *Allah—there is no God except Him—is the Living One, the All-sustainer. Neither drowsiness befalls Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth* (and what is between them and below the soil. He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible realm, and He does not divulge His Unseen Knowledge to anyone.) *Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission... He is the All-Exalted, the All-Supreme* (and all praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds) (al-Baqarah:255).

Some narrations say that the verse continues until the phrase: *and they shall remain in it forever* (al-Baqarah:257) and they tack on the phrase "and all praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds" at the end of this.

In yet another narration, the following variation of the verse is mentioned: *To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth.* (He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible realm, the All-beneficent, the All-Merciful, the Originator of the heavens and the earth,

the Master of majesty and generosity, the Lord of the great throne)... (al-Baqarah:255). The verse is then completed as we find it in the Qur'an today.

Regarding the variance in these narrations of the conveyed verses, some narrators have posited that such discrepancies aren't detrimental since they converge on the fundamental idea of alteration. However, it is countered that this justification doesn't strengthen the weak evidence, and some of these narrations are contradictory.

Certainly, we have pointed out the prevalent fabrication and alteration in narrations. This becomes evident to anyone delving into the narrations concerning creation, stories of prophets and ancient civilizations, exegesis of the Qur'anic verses, and events from the dawn of Islam. Of utmost concern to religion's adversaries, who are relentless in their efforts to extinguish the light of the Qur'an, snuff out its flame, and erase its influence, is the Holy Qur'an itself. This Qur'an is the impenetrable sanctuary and the solid pillar safeguarding religious teachings. It stands as the ever-enduring shield promoting the prophetic mission. These foes are acutely aware that undermining the Qur'an's authority would shake the foundation of prophethood, destabilize the religious order, and not a single cornerstone of Islam would hold firm.

What's astonishing is those who rely on narrations—attributed either to the companions or the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt—alleging the distortion of the Qur'an and thereby questioning its authoritative stature. If the Qur'an's credibility were to be challenged this way, both the prophethood and the foundational religious knowledge would be rendered void. What merit is there in asserting: "In history, a man claimed prophethood, presenting the Qur'an as his divine sign. Yet, after his passing, this miraculous Qur'an was purportedly altered. Our only means to affirm his proclamation rests on the unanimous agreement of his followers, all of whom vouched for his veracity and the miraculous nature of the Qur'an he brought forth. Furthermore, this consensus holds weight either because the aforementioned prophet declared it as evidence or because it unveils the stance of the Imāms from his lineage." Such a rationale raises profound concerns.

Broadly speaking, the possibility of tampering or alteration—strongly indicated by both the evidence and contextual indications—undermines the credibility of these narrations and nullifies their significance. Consequently, they do not retain any legal or rational authority. This

remains the case even for those among them that have authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) chains of transmission. The authenticity of the chain and the integrity of the narrators only dismisses their intentional lying; it doesn't negate the potential for others to have manipulated their foundational texts and collections.

Further, as previously mentioned, some of the narrations that hint at the distortion of the Qur'an introduce verses and chapters that don't resonate with the Qur'anic style. This disparity is evident to anyone examining them. Prominent examples include the purported chapters from the Qur'an known as Sūrah al-Khalʿ and Sūrah al-Ḥafd cited in Sunni sources.

Sūrah al-Khalʿ is reported to have said: "In the name of God, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. O God! We seek Your assistance and forgiveness. We praise You and do not reject You. We sever ties and abandon those who rebel against You."

Sūrah al-Ḥafd is alleged to read: "In the name of God, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. O God! Only You do we worship, and to You do we pray and bow. Towards You, we rush and hasten. We yearn for Your mercy and dread Your punishment. Surely, Your punishment will seize the disbelievers."

Another example of such narrations is the alleged "Sūrah al-Wilāyah" and others. The creators of these fabrications aimed to emulate the Qur'anic style. However, they deviated from the familiar Arabic prose and failed to capture the miraculous Divine style. As a result, their concoctions are jarring to the senses and are rejected by anyone with an appreciation for Arabic literary taste. You can review these narrations yourself to witness the truth of our claim. Most of those who consider these invented chapters and verses do so out of intense reverence for narrations, neglecting the Prophet's directive to measure them against the Qur'an. If not for this oversight, a simple comparison would be sufficient to conclude that these are not the words of God.

Regarding our statement that these distorted narrations, even assuming their chains of transmission are authentic, contradict the Qur'an—our intention is not to suggest they merely conflict with the apparent meaning of the verses: "*Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it*" (15:9) and "*Indeed, it is an august Book: falsehood cannot approach it, at present or in future*" (Fussilat:41-42). If that were our only

point, it would be a speculative argument since the clear wording of these verses provides speculative evidence. What we mean is that these narrations conflict with the definite evidence provided by the entirety of the Qur'an we possess, as we established in our first argument refuting the possibility of distortion in the Qur'an.

How can this be denied? The Qur'an we have in our possession showcases a miraculous and harmonious style throughout its parts. It is sufficient to refute any perceived inconsistencies within its verses and sections. It neither lacks nor falls short in conveying its genuine knowledge and divine holistic sciences. Its verses are interconnected, with its subsidiary teachings rooted in its foundational principles. Verses seamlessly flow from the peripherals to its core, among other unique characteristics of the Qur'anic structure as described by God.

**Response to the second argument:** The assertion is that fallible individuals cannot compile the Qur'an without introducing distortions. This claim is unfounded. Indeed, one could logically argue that the Qur'an's compilation might not align with its true form if there were no contextual indications suggesting its fidelity. Yet, to state that logic demands discrepancies in the Qur'an solely because it was assembled by fallible humans is not correct.

**Response to the third argument:** The premise revolves around Imām ʿAlī's compilation of the Qur'an and his subsequent presentation of it to the people. The argument suggests that if there were no variances between his rendition and the version widely circulated among Muslims, what would prompt him to introduce his version? However, this line of reasoning is flawed. The Imām's presentation doesn't imply differences in the core tenets of the faith or its various aspects. The distinction in his version primarily lies in the sequence of the chapters or verses within them, which were revealed incrementally, in a way that remains consistent with the religion's truths.

If there were deviations related to the fundamental truths of the religion, Imām would have presented his copy with cogent reasoning, defending it against objections. He wouldn't have merely showcased his version and allowed its rejection, as he's pointed out in several instances. It is not documented that he ever cited a specific chapter or verse from the Qur'an that distinctly referred to him. Had such references existed, he would have

contested their omission or distortion.

One might wonder if his actions were driven by a desire to uphold Muslim unity and prevent potential divisions. Yet, this idea is plausible only once there was consensus on the Qur'an's codex, and it was recognized as the official version. This perspective wouldn't hold during its compilation and before its broad dissemination across regions.

It's puzzling to think that thousands of verses regarding divine guardianship (*walāyah*) are absent from the Qur'an, allegedly known to just a minority of Muslims. Considering the Muslim community's zealous commitment to absorbing the Qur'an as it was revealed to the Prophet, and given the Prophet's meticulous efforts to elucidate its verses and broadcast them widely. The Qur'an clearly states the Prophet's role in teaching it, as seen in: "*and to teach them the Book and wisdom*" (62:2). Another verse mentions: "*so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them*" (al-Naḥl:44). So, how could any part go missing? There are some accounts, though not with unbroken chains of narrators (*mursal*), suggesting missing verses at the onset of Sūrah al-Nisā' between: "*If you fear that you may not deal justly with the orphans and then marry* (*other*) *women that you like*" (al-Nisa':3). These verses reportedly constitute over a third of the existing Qur'an, translating to over two thousand verses. Sunnī sources also allude to Sūrat Barā'ah initially having the *basmalah* and being comparable in length to Sūrah al-Baqarah. Furthermore, it's said that Sūrah al-Aḥzāb lacks two hundred verses, making it initially longer than Sūrah al-Baqarah by that count. Other reports echo these sentiments.[1]

It's pertinent to ask if it's conceivable that countless verses were abrogated from recitation. A section of Sunnī Qur'anic commentators introduced this idea, suggesting that God had made parts of the Qur'an forgotten and thus abrogated in recitation. Numerous queries arise from this notion. For instance, what does it mean that God allowed a verse to be forgotten and removed from recitation? If God abrogated these verses

1 Editor's note: This discussion examines Imām 'Alī's Qur'an version, noting differences in sequence but not core tenets. The potential absence of verses on divine guardianship (*walāyah*) is debated, considering the Prophet's thorough dissemination. Some narratives suggest missing sūrah portions, but lack continuous narration chains. The focus is on preserving the Qur'an's integrity.

because their directives were no longer valid, how do we regard the verses that are not practiced but remain in the Qur'an? Instances of such verses are: the directive about giving alms before privately conversing with the Prophet, the stipulation about male and female adulterers marrying each other, and the separation verse, among others.

Commentators who accept verses being abrogated in recitation categorize them into two: (1) Those abrogated both in recitation and practice. (2) Verses abrogated from recitation but still applicable. The well-known "verse of stoning" belongs to the second group.

Another perspective posits that God causes verses to be forgotten and abrogates them in recitation because they lack some Qur'anic attributes. This would infer that God erases them by making them forgotten. Such an idea conflicts with the Qur'anic description: "*Indeed it is an august Book: falsehood cannot approach it, from before it nor from behind it*" (Fussilat:41-42). This would also challenge the Qur'an's integrity. Additionally, the Qur'an wouldn't be definitive, a beacon to the right path, or a miraculous challenge presented by the Prophet. Thus, every verse portraying the Qur'an as flawless, truthful, definitive, illuminating, guiding, discerning truth from falsehood, miraculous, and safeguarded would be invalidated by this concept.

It is not justifiable to believe that the Qur'anic verses, which are clearly unrestricted in their meanings based on their contexts, only describe the part of the Qur'an that is currently available to us. These descriptions shouldn't be believed to exclude those verses that have been forgotten or had their recitation abrogated. In simpler terms, it's incorrect to assert that only a section of the Qur'an is a decisive word, guide, light, distinction between truth and falsehood, and an eternal miracle.

Additionally, when a verse undergoes abrogation in recitation, it becomes entirely forgotten and nullified. It's no longer beneficial or applicable in addressing any issue. This notion stands in contrast to the Qur'an's essence as a reminder.

To summarize, the narrations from both Sunnī and Shīʿah sources, discussing the distortion of the Qur'an and the claims of certain verses having their recitation abrogated, starkly contradict the Qur'an itself.

**Response to the fourth argument:** This argument pivots on narrations suggesting that events from the history of the Children of Israel will

recur in this nation. One such event was the distortion of their divine scripture. There's no doubt regarding the authenticity of these narrations. They have been extensively reported, either in *tawātur* (abundance) or *mustafīḍ* (near abundance). However, these narrations don't imply that this nation will mirror the Children of Israel in every aspect. This is evident, even self-explanatory.

The hinted similarity in these narrations indicates a mere partial resemblance in terms of outcomes. From this perspective, the parallel drawn with the Children of Israel concerning scripture distortion might simply suggest that disputes will arise within the Prophet's nation, leading to divisions. This fragmentation will result in the emergence of seventy-three sects accusing one another of disbelief, reminiscent of how the Christians split into seventy-two sects and the Jews into seventy-one. Numerous narrations, considered by hadith scholars to be of *tawātur* status, have highlighted this.

It's commonly known that each sect uses the Qur'an to substantiate its beliefs. However, this doesn't imply quoting from different Qur'an versions or that its text has been altered. Their prejudices and uncritical reliance on certain exegesis narrations shape their interpretation of God's Book. They often don't distinguish between authentic and weak narrations and rarely validate them against the Qur'an.

In essence, these narrations hint at some resemblances between these two nations but not about distorting their scriptures. Thus, claiming that there have been changes or omissions in the Qur'an is in direct opposition to the Qur'an itself.

## Section Four (Examining Narrations)

1) In the *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*: ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said to Abū Bakr, "O Khalīfah of the Messenger of God! Most of the bearers of the Qur'ān were killed on the Day of Yamāma. I fear for the Qur'ān that its bearers may vanish; shouldn't you compile it?" Abū Bakr replied, "Should I do something that the Messenger of God didn't?" Yet, ʿUmar persisted until Abū Bakr gathered and inscribed it on sheets. It had previously been scattered on palm stalks and other materials.

He then appointed twenty-five men from the Quraysh and fifty from the Anṣār, saying, "Write down the Qur'ān and present it to Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ,

for he is eloquent."

Some have narrated that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib compiled it shortly after the demise of the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him and his family). He presented it, carrying it on a camel, saying, "This is the Qur'ān I have compiled." It was mentioned that he had divided it into seven sections, and then he listed the sections.

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2) In the *Tārīkh Abū al-Fidā'*: Many reciters from the Muhājirūn and Anṣār were killed in the battle against Musaylimah. Observing the large number of casualties, Abū Bakr ordered the Qur'ān to be compiled from the mouths of men, palm stalks, and hides. That compilation was kept with Ḥafṣa bint ʿUmar, the Prophet's wife (blessings and peace be upon him and his family).

**Author's comment:** The original source which both books are quoting from is *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

3) al-Bukhārī mentions this following narration on the authority of Zayd b. Thābit: Abū Bakr sent for me after the massacre of the people of Yamāma. When I arrived, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was with him. Abū Bakr said, "'Umar came to me and expressed his concerns that many Qur'ān reciters have been killed, and he fears that if the killings continue, much of the Qur'ān might be lost. He suggested that the Qur'ān should be compiled. I replied to ʿUmar, 'How can we do something that the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him and his family) didn't do?' ʿUmar replied, 'By God, it is for the best.' He kept revisiting this matter with me until God enlightened my heart to it, and I came to see the same point as ʿUmar."

Zayd continued, "Abū Bakr said to me, 'You are a wise young man, and we don't doubt you. You used to write the revelations for the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him and his family). So, search for the Qur'ān and compile it.' By God, if they had ordered me to move a mountain, it wouldn't have been heavier than this task. I said, 'How can you do something that the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him and his family) didn't do?' He replied, 'By God, it's for the best.'

Abū Bakr kept persuading me until God enlightened my heart to accept the task. I began gathering the Qur'ān from date palm leaves, white stones, and from the hearts of men. I found the last verses of Sūrat al-Tawba

with Khuzayma al-Anṣārī, which no one else had: "*Indeed, a Messenger has come to you...*" until its conclusion. These sheets remained with Abū Bakr until he passed away, then with ʿUmar during his life, and after that with Ḥafṣa b.t ʿUmar."

4) From Ibn Abī Dāwūd, through the chain from Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥāṭib, it's mentioned: ʿUmar arrived and declared, "Whoever has received any part of the Qur'ān from the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him and his family), bring it forth." The revelations were being written on sheets, boards, and date palm stalks. ʿUmar would not accept any verse unless it was verified by two witnesses.

Another report from him, through the chain from Hishām b. ʿUrwa from his father, though with a missing link in the chain, mentions: Abū Bakr instructed ʿUmar and Zayd, "Sit at the mosque's entrance, and whoever comes to you with verses from God's Book, corroborated by two witnesses, write it down."

5) In *al-Itqān*, from Ibn Ashtah regarding the manuscripts of the Qur'an, it is related from al-Layth b. Sa'd who said: "The first person to compile the Qur'an was Abū Bakr, and it was written by Zayd. People would approach Zayd b. Thābit, and he would not document a verse without testimony from two just witnesses. The last verses of the Sūrah Barā'ah were only found with Abū Khuzaimah b. Thābit. He said, 'Write it down, for the Messenger of God equated his testimony to that of two men.' It was written. However, ʿUmar brought the verse of stoning, but it was not documented as he was the only witness."

6) From Ibn Abī Dāwūd in the manuscripts, via Muḥammad b. Isḥāq from Yaḥyā b. ʿAbbād b. ʿAbdullāh b. al-Zubayr from his father, he said: "al-Hārith b. Khuzaimah came to me with these two verses from the end of Sūrah Barā'ah. He testified, 'I heard them from the Messenger of God, and I have memorized them.' ʿUmar said, 'I too testify. I have heard them.' He further said, 'Had there been three verses, I would have made them into a separate Sūrah. Check the last Sūrah of the Qur'an and place them at its end.'"

Also from him (Ibn Abī Dāwūd), through the path of Abī al-A'ālīyah

from ʿUbay b. Kaʿb: "When they compiled the Qurʾan, upon reaching the verse in Sūrah Barāʾah, 'God has turned aside their hearts, for they are a people who do not understand (al-Tawbah:127)' they thought this was the last of what was revealed. However, ʿUbay said, 'The Messenger of God recited to me after this two verses, "Certainly, a Messenger has come to you..." to the end of the Sūrah.'"

7) In *al-Itqān*, from al-Deir Aʾāqūlī in his accounts, we were told by Ibrāhīm b. Yasār, who heard from Sufyān b. ʿUyayna from al-Zuhrī from ʿUbayd from Zayd b. Thābit who said, "The Prophet passed away, and the Qurʾan was not yet compiled into a single document."

8) In *Mustadrak al-Hākim*, through his chain of narrators from Zayd b. Thābit, he said: "We were with the Messenger of God compiling the Qurʾan from pieces of parchment."

**Author's comment:** It's possible that certain revealed verses were integrated into specific chapters or that chapters of similar nature were grouped together, such as the extended chapters (*al-ṭiwāl*), the chapters with one hundred verses or more (*al-maʾīn*), and the in-depth chapters (*al-mufaṣṣalāt*). These classifications are found in the Prophet's narrations. Nevertheless, it's indisputable that the Qurʾan was compiled into a single volume after the Prophet's passing. This context is crucial when delving into the subsequent narrations.

9) In Ṣaḥīḥ al-Nasaʾī, from Ibn ʿUmar, it was said: "I gathered the Qurʾan and recited it every night. When this reached the Prophet, he said: 'Recite it in one month.'"

10) In al-Itqān, from Ibn Abī Dāwūd with a good chain of narration, Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qurazī said: "During the time of the Messenger of God, five from the Anṣār compiled the Qurʾan: Muʿādh b. Jabal, ʿUbāda b. Ṣāmit, ʿUbay b. Kaʿb, Abū Dardā, and Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī."

11) In the same source, from al-Bayhaqī in al-Madkhal, from Ibn Sīrīn, it was said: "During the time of the Messenger of God, four people compiled the Qurʾan and there was no disagreement regarding them: Muʿādh

b. Jabal, ʿUbay b. Kaʿb, Abū Zaid, and they differed regarding two out of three: Abū Dardā and ʿUthmān," and it was also said: "'Uthmān and Tamīm al-Dārī."

12) From the same source, from him and from Ibn Abī Dāwūd, from al-Shaʿbī, it was said: "During the Prophet's era, seven individuals compiled the Qur'an: ʿUbay, Zaid, Muʿādh, Abū Dardā, Saʿīd b. ʿUbaid, Abū Zaid, and Mujamʿ b. Ḥāritha. He took all of it except for two or three chapters."

13) Also, from the same source, from Ibn Ashtah in the Book of Maṣāḥif, through the chain from Kahmaṣ from Ibn Buraidah, it was said: "The first to compile the Qur'an in a single volume was Sālim, the freed slave of Abū Ḥudhaifah. He swore that he would not wear his cloak until he had compiled it, and he did."

**Author's comment:** At most, these narrations indicate that they simply gathered the revealed chapters and verses. However, the meticulous arrangement of these chapters and verses as we see today, or in any other order, was not their focus. This was the initial compilation during the time of Abū Bakr.

## Section Five

The Qur'ān was compiled a second time during the reign of ʿUthmān due to discrepancies in the various manuscripts and the proliferation of readings.

1) al-Ya'qūbī mentioned in his history: ʿUthmān gathered the Qur'ān, arranged it, and grouped the longer chapters with the longer ones and the shorter ones with the shorter ones. He then ordered copies of the Qur'ān to be made and distributed across various regions. Once compiled, he soaked them in hot water and vinegar. Some say he burned them, leaving no manuscript except for the one belonging to Ibn Mas'ūd.

Ibn Mas'ūd was in Kūfa and refused to hand over his manuscript to ʿAbdullah b. ʿĀmir. ʿUthmān wrote to him, expressing deep concerns about the religion and the Muslim community. One day, Ibn Mas'ūd entered the mosque while ʿUthmān was delivering a sermon. ʿUthmān remarked about the arrival of a troublesome person and spoke harshly to Ibn Mas'ūd. Later, on ʿUthmān's order, Ibn Mas'ūd was assaulted, resulting in two broken

ribs. ʿĀ'isha then spoke up, voicing her strong disapproval.

ʿUthmān sent copies of the Qur'ān to various cities: one to Kūfa, one to Basra, one to Madīna, one to Mecca, one to Egypt, one to Shām, one to Bahrain, one to Yemen, and one to al-Jazeera.

He instructed people to follow one standardized version. The reason behind this decision was the information he received about people attributing the Qur'ān to certain families. He wanted a single, unified version. Some say that Ibn Mas'ūd wrote to him about this matter, and when Ibn Mas'ūd learned that the manuscripts were being burned, he clarified that this wasn't his intention. Another claim suggests that Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān was the one who wrote to ʿUthmān about this.

2) In "al-Itqān," Bukhārī narrated from Anas that Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān came to ʿUthmān. Ḥudhayfah had been fighting alongside the people of Shām during the conquests of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as with the people of Iraq. He was alarmed by their differences in Qur'ānic recitation. He said to ʿUthmān, "Save this community before they differ about the Book like Jews and Christians did." ʿUthmān then sent for Ḥafsah and asked her to send her manuscript of the Qur'ān, with the intention to copy it and then return it. Ḥafsah sent it to ʿUthmān, who then commanded Zaid b. Thābit, ʿAbdullāh b. Al-Zubair, Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀs, and ʿAbdur Raḥmān b. Ḥārith b. Ḥishām to transcribe copies. ʿUthmān said to the three Qurayshī men, "If you and Zaid b. Thābit disagree on any point in the Qur'ān, write it in the dialect of Quraish, for the Qur'ān was revealed in this dialect." They did so, and when they had copied the sheets, ʿUthmān sent a copy to each of the main centers of the empire and ordered that all other Qur'ānic materials, whether fragmentary or complete copies, be burnt. Zaid said, "When we were copying the manuscript, I missed a verse from Sūrat al-Aḥzāb which I used to hear the Prophet reciting. We searched for it and found it with Khuzaima b. Thābit al-Anṣāri: 'Among the Believers are men who have been true to their covenant with God.' So, we included it in its Sūrah in the Qur'ān."

3) In the same book, Ibn Ashtah narrated through Ayyūb from Abū Qilābah, who said a man from the tribe of Banī ʿĀmer told him that Anas b. Mālik said, "During ʿUthmān's time, they differed about the Qur'ān, to

the point where students and teachers would fight over it." This reached ʿUthmān b. Affān, who commented, "You mock it and make mistakes in it. Those who are far from me are even more likely to make mistakes. O companions of Muḥammad, come together and write a standard copy for the people." So, they gathered, and whenever they disagreed or were uncertain about a verse, they would say, "The Prophet recited this verse to so-and-so." They would then send for that person, even if he was outside Madīnah, and ask him, "How did the Prophet recite this verse?" He would then tell them, and they would write it down, leaving space for it.

4) In the same source, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Dāwūd, via Ibn Sīrīn, from Kathīr b. Aflah, who stated, "When ʿUthmān intended to compile the copies of the Qur'an, he assembled twelve individuals from the Quraysh and the Anṣār. They requested the copy that was in the possession of Umm (the Mother of Believers), and it was subsequently brought to ʿUthmān. He oversaw their work, and if they had any disagreements concerning a particular matter, they would set it aside for later." Muḥammad added, "I presume that whenever they deferred any issue, it was to consult the one among them who had most recently memorized the verse. They would then proceed to write it down based on his recitation."

5) It is narrated from Ibn Abī Dāwūd, through Suwayd b. Ghafalah, who said, "'Alī stated, 'Speak only well of ʿUthmān, for by God, what he did concerning the manuscripts of the Qur'an was based on a consensus from among us. He asked, "What do you say about these recitations? For it has reached me that some people claim: 'My recitation is better than yours,' and this is near blasphemy." We asked, "What is your opinion?" He said, "I think that people should be united under a single manuscript of the Qur'an so that there is no division or disagreement."'"

6) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is reported from Ibn adh-Dharīs through ʿAlabā' b. Aḥmar that when ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān wanted to write the Qur'anic manuscripts, they intended to remove the 'waw' in the verse from Barā'ah: "Wa alladhīna yakanizūna adh-dhahaba wal-fiḍḍah." Abū said, "You will either include it, or I will lay my sword on my shoulder." So, they included it.

7) In al-Itqān, it is narrated from Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, At-Tirmidhī, Al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Ḥibbān, and al-Ḥākim through Ibn ʿAbbās, who said, "I asked ʿUthmān: 'What led you to place al-Anfāl, which is among the Mathānī, and Barā'ah, which is among the Mi'īn, close to each other without inserting the line *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim* between them, and you included them among al-Sabʿ at-Tiwāl?' 'Uthmān replied: 'The Messenger of God received the revelation of chapters with multiple verses. Whenever something was revealed to him, he would call one of those who could write and say, "Place these verses in the chapter that mentions such and such." al-Anfāl was one of the earliest chapters revealed in Medina, while Barā'ah was one of the last to be revealed. Their themes were similar, so I assumed they were from the same chapter. The Messenger of God passed away without clarifying that they were from the same chapter. That's why I joined them without inserting the line Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim, and included them in al-Sabʿ at-Tiwāl.'"

**Author's comment:** Based on the narrations mentioned, including that of Ibn Jubayr, the seven extended chapters are: (1) al-Baqarah (2) Āl ʿImrān (3) al-Nisā' (4) al-Mā'idah (5) al-Anʿām (6) al-Aʿrāf (7) Yūnus. Initially, during the primary compilation of the Qur'an, it appears these chapters were organized in this sequence. However, ʿUthmān later adjusted this arrangement. He positioned Sūrah al-Anfāl, categorized among the repeating chapters, alongside Sūrah al-Barā'ah, which belongs to the chapters of about a hundred verses that traditionally precede the repetitive ones. He placed these between Sūrah al-Aʿrāf and Sūrah Yūnus, ensuring Sūrah al-Anfāl preceded Sūrah al-Barā'ah.

## Section Six

The narrations discussed in the two preceding sections are among the most renowned concerning the compilation of the Qur'an. They vary between authentic and inauthentic. These reports suggest that the initial official compilation of the Qur'an during Abū Bakr's reign involved compiling various sūrahs (chapters) that had been inscribed on palm stalks, thin white stones, shoulder blades, animal hides, and pieces of leather. Dispersed verses were appropriately integrated into their corresponding sūrahs.

The second official compilation during ʿUthmān's reign aimed to

align the widespread versions of the Qur'an with the official version from the first compilation. This effort emerged due to discrepancies appearing in individual copies and the existence of variant readings. The goal was to consolidate the recitations into one uniformed copy. A noteworthy distinction between the second and the initial compilation is that Zayd incorporated the verse: "*Among the faithful are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah...*" (al-Aḥzāb: 23) into Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Before this incorporation, this verse was absent from the Qur'an for fifteen years.

Furthermore, al-Bukhārī narrated from Ibn al-Zubayr who said: I asked ʿUthmān, regarding the verse, "*Those of you who die and leave widows*" which another verse had abrogated, "Why did you neither keep it nor omit it?" ʿUthmān replied, "Oh nephew, I won't change any of it from its place."

Anyone who examines these narrations impartially will observe that, while they are singular and not frequently narrated (not *tawātur*), they are supported by unassailable external evidences. The Prophet communicated every revelation he received. He withheld nothing, educating and elucidating for his followers the meanings of what was divinely sent down to him—a fact explicitly stated in the Qur'an. Following his passing, a segment of his community persistently devoted themselves to the study and teaching of the Qur'an—both its meanings and recitation. They were known as the "Reciters of the Qur'an" (*qurrā'*). Regrettably, many of them perished in the Battle of Yamāmah.

Despite this loss, the fervor to learn and recite the Qur'an remained undiminished among the people. The Qur'an was never absent from the Muslim community, not even for a fraction of a day, until it was consolidated into a singular manuscript upon which consensus was reached. Thus, the Qur'an was preserved from the alterations that befell the Torah, the Gospel, and scriptures of other prophets.

Additionally, there exists an abundance of narrations in both Shīʿah and Sunnī traditions that describe the Prophet frequently reciting numerous Qur'anic chapters in the obligatory daily prayers and other recommended prayers. These recitations were heard publicly. The majority of the Qur'anic chapters, whether revealed in Mecca or Medina, are named in these traditions.

Furthermore, the narration from ʿUthmān b. Abī al-ʿĀṣ regarding the verse: "*Indeed, Allah enjoins justice and kindness...*" (al-Naḥl:90)

highlights that the Prophet remarked, "Gabriel brought this verse to me and instructed me to position it correctly within the chapter." Similar narrations suggest the Prophet recited entire chapters of the Qur'an, like Āl ʿImrān, al-Nisā', among others. This implies that he directed the scribes of revelation to appropriately position certain verses within their respective chapters.

Having elaborated on this, we emphasize that the most compelling evidence that the Qur'an remains unchanged is what we mentioned at the outset of this discourse. The Qur'an in our hands today possesses all the honorable attributes described by God Himself.

To summarize the essence of the narrations we've discussed:

**Firstly:** The text we have between the covers, referred to as the Qur'an, is undoubtedly the Word of God. It has neither seen additions nor undergone any alterations. However, while nothing has been changed or added, we cannot decisively deny the potential omission of certain parts. For instance, there are multiple reports suggesting that ʿUmar frequently referred to the so-called "verse of stoning." Yet, this verse didn't make its way into the official text that we have now. The numerous narrations regarding this—which, according to Ālūsī in his *Tafsīr*, are too many to enumerate—do not suggest that these verses were annulled in recitation. We've already established the inaccuracy of such a claim. Asserting that some verses were annulled in recitation from the Qur'an and thus omitted is even more controversial than the assertion of distortion.

Furthermore, those who owned personal copies of the Qur'an, like ʿAlī, Ubayy b. Kaʿb, and ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd, did not contest the content of the official version. An exception to this is the account that Ibn Masʿūd did not include Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās in his personal manuscript. He believed: "These two chapters are a remedy sent down by Gabriel to the Messenger of God specifically for al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn." However, this view was contested by other companions and the Imāms. Reports confirming them as chapters of the Qur'an are overwhelmingly numerous (*tawātur*).

In essence, while these narrations are individual accounts, they are corroborated by strong contextual evidence. They convincingly negate any additions or alterations to the Qur'an. However, they don't conclusively dismiss the idea of omissions. They merely challenge this on a speculative

level. Some argue that the reports on the Qur'an being modified through addition, change, or omission are widespread (*tawātur*), but these claims are unfounded.

The primary reason for our argument is the evidence we put forth at the start of our research. The Qur'an that is present with us today possesses the illustrious qualities with which God has described the genuine Qur'an He revealed to His Messenger. These qualities encompass it being a clear statement, an eliminator of disputes, a reminder, a guide, a light, a clarifier of authentic knowledge and natural laws, and a miraculous sign, among its other noble attributes.

Building on this point, it's imperative to understand that the Qur'an's claim to being the Word of God revealed to His Messenger is supported by these very eminent qualities. It does not require any external affirmation. This means that the Qur'an doesn't depend on widespread transmission or nearly widespread transmission as long as these attributes are inherent within it. On the contrary, the Qur'an, characterized by these grand qualities, is evidence of its trustworthiness. This sets it apart from other books and scripts attributed to their respective authors. Likewise, it's distinct from scholars' statements, which rely on definitive transmission and extensive or near-extensive reporting for validation. The Qur'an's proof of authenticity is intrinsic.

In summary, the aforementioned narrations, as you can see, are individual ones surrounded by definitive indicators negating any tampering, be it through additions or alterations, with absolute certainty except for assumptions. The claim of some regarding continuous transmission from three perspectives lacks a solid foundation.

To rely on this perspective is based on the argument we introduced at the beginning of these investigations: that the Qur'an in our possession embodies those noble attributes by which God has described the real Qur'an that He revealed to His Messenger. This signifies that the evidence of the Qur'an, in proving that it is the Speech of God sent down to His Messenger, is its very self, adorned with those distinguished attributes. This understanding does not hinge on any external factor; its evidence stands firm wherever it is established, in the hands of whoever it may be, and by whatever means it reaches us.

In other words, the Qur'an, which descended from God to the Prophet,

does not rely on its noble attributes based on its confirmed transmission to him through continuous or frequent transmission, even if it possesses that. Instead, the matter is the opposite. Its possession of these noble attributes is the proof for its transmission. This is unlike books and letters attributed to authors and writers, or the sayings reported from scholars and thinkers, which require definite transmission, or at least frequent or abundant transmission, to be considered authentic. The very essence of the Qur'an is the evidence for its authenticity.

**Secondly:** The arrangement of the chapters (sūrahs) comes from the companions during the first and second compilations. Evidence for this is what has been previously mentioned in the traditions regarding 'Uthman's placement of al-Anfāl and al-Barā'ah between al-A'rāf and Yūnus, even though they were positioned later in the first compilation.

Another piece of evidence is the variations in the order of the chapters in the Qur'an of other companions compared to the first and second compilations. It has been reported that the Qur'an of 'Alī was arranged according to the order of revelation. It began with al-'Alaq, followed by al-Muddaththir, then al-Qalam, then al-Muzzammil, then al-Masad, then al-Takwīr, and so on until the end of the Meccan and Medinan revelations. This order was mentioned in *al-Itqan* as reported from Ibn Fāris. In *Tārikh al-Ya'qūbī*, another order for 'Alī's Qur'an is mentioned.

It is reported from Ibn Ashṭah in his *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥifs* that, based on his chain of narrators from Abū Ja'far al-Kūfī, the arrangement of Abū (someone's) codex significantly deviates from the commonly accepted version of the Qur'an. Similarly, through his narration from Jarīr b. 'Abdul Ḥamīd, he describes the arrangement of 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd's codex. This arrangement starts with the longer chapters, followed by those roughly a hundred verses in length, then the medium length chapters, and finally the short chapters. This order also contrasts with the widely accepted version of the Qur'an.

Many scholars hold the view that the arrangement of the chapters in the Qur'an is divinely ordained, asserting that the Prophet Muhammad was commanded to arrange them in this order through guidance from the Angel Gabriel, by the command of God Almighty. Some even went to the extreme of claiming that this has been transmitted through continuous chains of narrators. One wonders where this continuous chain is, given

that the main narrations on this subject have already been presented, and they contain no such indication. There will also be a discussion on some scholars' evidence for this claim, which is based on the belief that the Qur'an was first sent down in its entirety to the lowest heaven from the Preserved Tablet, and then revealed in stages to the Prophet Muhammad.

**Thirdly:** The placement of certain Qur'anic verses, which were revealed separately and are now located where they are, was not devoid of intervention by the companions through their independent reasoning. This is evident from the narrations regarding the first compilation, as previously mentioned.

As for the narration from 'Uthmān b. Abī al-'Ās from the Prophet which states, "Gabriel came to me and instructed me to place this verse in this particular position of the chapter: 'Indeed, God commands justice and good conduct' (the verse)," it does not necessarily indicate that the Prophet did this for every verse. If we were to assume this narration as reliable, it still does not provide evidence when we consider the preceding narrations that the Companions' arrangement aligned with that of the Prophet. Mere positive assumptions about the Companions do not allow for narrations to serve as evidence of this. What it does suggest is that they would not intentionally deviate from the order he had conveyed for verses they were familiar with, but not necessarily for those they were unaware of.

In the earlier narrations regarding the first compilation, it becomes evident that they were not fully aware of the positions of all the verses, nor the essence of them.

This understanding is further supported by extensive narrations from both Shi'a and Sunni sources which indicate that the Prophet and the believers would only come to know the completion of a chapter when the Basmala (*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*) was revealed. This is narrated by Abū Dāwūd, al-Hākim, al-Bayhaqī, and al-Bazzār via Sa'īd b. Jubayr as found in *al-Itqān*, quoting Ibn 'Abbās saying, "The Prophet would not recognize the conclusion of a chapter until 'In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' was revealed to him." al-Bazzār added, "When it was revealed, he recognized that the chapter had ended, and another one began or was facing him."

Also, from al-Hākim through another chain from Sa'īd, from Ibn 'Abbās, it was stated: "The Muslims would not know the conclusion of a

chapter until 'In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' was revealed. Once it was revealed, they knew that the chapter had concluded." Its chain of narration meets the criteria of both al-Bukhāri and Muslim.

Further, from al-Hākim through another source from Sa'īd, quoting Ibn 'Abbās: "Whenever Gabriel came to the Prophet and recited 'In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful', he knew it introduced a new chapter." The chain of this narration is authentic.

**Comment:** Similar narrations to this have been conveyed in several other reports, and this has also been narrated through Shi'a sources from al-Bāqir.

The narrations, as you see, are explicit in their indication that verses were arranged by the Prophet according to the order of revelation. Thus, verses revealed in Mecca were in Makki chapters, and those revealed in Madīnah were in Madanī chapters, unless a chapter was revealed partly in Mecca and partly in Madīnah. This exception only applies to a single chapter.

This necessitates the view that the observed differences in the placements of verses are based on the independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) of the companions.

To clarify, there are countless narrations regarding the reasons for revelation, which indicate that many verses in Madanī chapters were revealed in Mecca, and vice versa. Also, some verses of the Qur'an, revealed towards the end of the Prophet's era, are found in chapters that were revealed at the beginning of the Hijrah. Between these times, many other chapters were revealed. An example is Sūrah al-Baqarah, which was revealed in the first year of the Hijrah. It contains the verses about usury (ribā), and the narrations suggest they are among the last verses to be revealed to the Prophet. It has been narrated that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said, "The Messenger of God passed away without explaining the verses of usury to us." Among these verses is the saying of God: "And fear a Day when you will be returned to God" (al-Baqarah:281). It has been reported that this was the last verse revealed to the Prophet.

These verses, which are scattered in topic and are placed in chapters that don't align with their Makki or Madanī classification, are positioned out of their chronological order of revelation, and this seems to be due to

the independent reasoning of the companions.

Supporting this is what is mentioned in *al-Itqān* from Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, where it has been narrated that ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib collected the Qur'an in the order of revelation shortly after the death of the Prophet. This narration is documented by Ibn Abī Dāwūd and stands as one of the consistent evidences in the narrations of the Shi'a.

This is what is indicated by the apparent narrations of the aforementioned section. However, the majority insist that the ordering of the verses is divinely prescribed. The verses of the *Muṣḥaf* that circulates today, which is the *Uthmānī Muṣḥaf*, are arranged as the Prophet ordered, under the guidance of Gabriel. They interpret the apparent narrations to mean that the companions' compilation was not about ordering but rather was a collection of what they knew and memorized from the Prophet concerning the chapters and their arranged verses, bound together in one place.

You are well-aware that the nature of the initial compilation, as indicated by the narrations, categorically refutes this claim.

Some might use as evidence what some have claimed as a consensus on this matter. al-Suyūṭī relayed in *al-Itqān* from al-Zarkashī the claim of a consensus on this, and from Abū Ja'far b. al-Zubayr, there's a negation of any difference in this matter among Muslims. This is a reported consensus that should not be relied upon, especially after the existence of disagreement on the original alteration and the implications of the aforementioned narrations against it.

And sometimes they provide evidence based on the concept of *tawātur* (continuous, corroborated narration). This is found in the statements of many of them who claimed the continuity of the present order from the Prophet. This claim is astounding. It is conveyed in *al-Itqān* after quoting what was narrated by al-Bukhārī and others through various chains from Anas, who said: "The Prophet passed away, and the Qur'ān was not compiled by anyone except four: Abū al-Dardā', Mu'ādh b. Jabal, Zayd b. Thābit, and Abū Zayd." In another narration, it says "'Ubayy b. Ka'b" instead of Abū al-Dardā'. al-Māzarī stated regarding this: "A group of heretics clung to this statement of Anas, but we do not concede to their interpretation of it. We admit it in its apparent sense, but how can they claim that the actual matter is as such? We admit it, but it does not necessarily mean that if many did not memorize the entire Qur'ān, then the majority

didn't memorize its compilation. It is not a condition for *tawātur* that every individual must memorize the entirety; rather, if everyone memorizes the whole, even if distributed among them, it suffices."

As for his claim that the apparent meaning of Anas's statement is not intended, this is something that should not be heeded in linguistic research based on the apparent wording unless supported by evidence from the speaker's statement or a suitable alternative. Merely making a claim or relying on another's statement does not suffice.

Certainly, if Anas's words were interpreted contrary to their apparent meaning, it would have been necessary to understand that these four only compiled, during the Prophet's time, the majority of the Qur'ān and most of its chapters and verses. It's not that they and other companions compiled the entire Qur'ān as in the Musḥaf al-'Uthmānī, memorized the order of its chapters and verses, and knew the position of each verse in relation to the others. Zayd b. Thābit himself—who is one of the four mentioned in Anas's narration and the one responsible for both the first and second compilations—explicitly states in his narrations that he did not memorize all the verses.

Similarly, in *al-Itqān*, from Ibn Ashṭah in al-Muṣḥaf, with an authentic chain, from Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, it was said: "Abū Bakr died without having compiled the Qur'ān, and 'Umar was killed without having compiled the Qur'ān."

As for his statement: "We accept it, but where do they get the idea that the actual matter is as such?" It can be countered with: "Where does this claimant get the idea that the reality is as he claims, especially when the evidences are known to contradict what he claims?"

As for his statement: "It is sufficient for ensuring *tawātur* (consecutive transmission) that everyone memorizes the entire Qur'ān through distribution," this is a clear fallacy. Because this only indicates that the entirety of the Qur'ān, as a whole, is transmitted by *tawātur*. However, the fact that each and every one of the Qur'ānic verses is memorized in its specific place and context by tawātur is not evident, and this is clear.

In *al-Itqān*, it's transmitted from al-Baghawī who said in his Sharḥ al-Sunnah: "The Companions compiled the Qur'ān between the two covers, which God revealed to His Messenger, without adding or omitting anything from it, fearing some of it might be lost with the departure

of its memorizers. They wrote it as they heard it from the Messenger of God, without advancing or delaying anything, or imposing an order they did not take from the Messenger of God. The Messenger of God used to instruct his companions and teach them what was revealed to him from the Qur'ān in the order that is now in our *Muṣḥafs*, with Jibrīl dictating that to him and informing him, upon the revelation of every verse, that 'this verse should be written after such-and-such verse in such-and-such chapter'. It's confirmed that the effort of the Companions was in compiling it in one place, not in ordering it. Indeed, the Qur'ān is written in the *Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ* (Preserved Tablet) in this order. God revealed it all at once to the nearest heaven, then He revealed it piecemeal as needed. The order of revelation is different from the order of recitation."

And it was transmitted from Ibn al-Ḥaṣār who said: "The arrangement of the sūrahs and the placement of the verses in their positions was indeed by revelation. The Messenger of God used to say: 'Place such-and-such verse in such-and-such position.' Certainty has been attained from the consecutively transmitted reports about this order from the Messenger of God. And the Companions only agreed to place it this way in the *Muṣḥaf*. End of quote." And it was also transmitted, something similar, from a group of others like al-Bayhaqī, al-Ṭaybī, and Ibn Ḥajar.

As for their statement: "The Companions compiled the Qur'ān between the two covers, which God revealed to His Messenger, without adding or omitting anything from it" there is nothing among the preceding narrations that indicates this. What is confirmed from their implications is that they only affirmed what was proven by evidence regarding the text of the verses. There's no indication in that about the manner of arranging the verses that were revealed separately. However, it is clear, yes, in the narration from Ibn 'Abbās about 'Uthmān that points to this, but the matter is that he used to instruct some of the revelation scribes with that, which is different from informing all the Companions. And that narration contradicts the reports of the first compilation and the news of the descent of *Bismillah* and others.

And as for their statement: "Indeed, the Prophet taught the Companions this order present in our *Maṣāḥif* through a directive from Gabriel and heavenly revelation," it seems to be a reference to the hadith of 'Uthmān b. Abī al-'Āṣ, previously mentioned, regarding the verse "Indeed,

God commands justice and good conduct." As you've learned from what has been mentioned, it is a single narration concerning a specific position of a single verse. And how does that compare to the positions of all the scattered verses?

As for their statement: "the Qur'ān is written in the *Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ* (Preserved Tablet) in this order. God revealed it all at once to the nearest heaven, then He revealed it piecemeal as needed."—this is an allusion to what has been extensively reported from both the Shi'a and Sunni channels concerning the Qur'an's descent all at once from the Preserved Tablet to the nearest heaven, and then its subsequent piecemeal revelation to the Prophet. However, the narrations do not have the slightest indication that the Qur'an was written in the Preserved Tablet and organized in the nearest heaven in the order found in the *Muṣḥaf*[1] we have, and this is evident.

Certainly, there will be a discussion, if God wills, about the meaning of the Qur'an being written on the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Maḥfūẓ*) and its descent to the nearest heaven in the context of the verses that are relevant to this, such as the beginnings of Sūrah al-Zukhrūf and Sūrah al-Dukhān, and Sūrah al-Qadr.

As for their statement: "Indeed, certainty has been attained through continuous transmission from the Messenger of God regarding this order present in the *Maṣāḥif*," you have come to know that it is a claim devoid of evidence. This continuous transmission is not known concerning each verse, and how can it be when numerous narrations mention that Ibn Mas'ūd did not include the chapters of protection (*Mu'awwidhatayn*) in his *Muṣḥaf*, stating they were not part of the Qur'ān. Instead, he believed that Gabriel revealed them as protections for Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. He used to exclude them from the *Maṣāḥif*. No report suggests that he ever retracted this statement. So, how could this continuous transmission have remained hidden from him throughout his life after the initial compilation?

## Section Seven

The discussion is related to the previous research regarding the narrations of forgetting. A general reference has been made to them, and they

1 Editor's note: The term *Muṣḥaf* refers to a written copy of the Qur'an. The term is often used to describe the physical book that contains the verses of the Qur'an, typically organized into chapters or sūrahs.

are several narrations reported through the channels of Ahl al-Sunnah concerning the abrogation and forgetting of the Qur'ān. They attributed to these narrations what has been reported about tampering with the Qur'ān, either through omission or alteration.

Here are examples of these reports:

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Hākim regarding honorific titles, Ibn ʿAdī, and Ibn ʿAsākir, from Ibn ʿAbbās who said: "What used to be revealed to the Prophet at night, he would forget by day. So, God revealed: 'Whatever verse We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring forth (in place of it) a better verse or similar.'"

(2) In the same source, from Abū Dāwūd regarding abrogations, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalā'il*, from Abū ʿUmāmah: A group from the Anṣār, companions of the Prophet, informed him that a man woke up in the middle of the night intending to recite a chapter he had committed to memory, yet he couldn't remember anything from it except "*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*." This happened to some of his companions. They inquired from the Messenger of God about the chapter. He remained silent for a moment and didn't respond. Then he said: "It was abrogated last night, and it was removed from their chests and from everywhere it was present."

**Comment:** The story is narrated through several channels, in terms that are closely related in content.

(3) In the same source, from ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, Abū Dāwūd in his book on abrogation, his son in al-Maṣāḥif, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Hākim, who authenticated it from Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ: He read, "Whatever verse We abrogate or cause to be postponed..." It was said to him: "Indeed, Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib reads it as 'cause to be forgotten.'" Saʿd responded, "The Qur'ān was not revealed to al-Musayyib nor to the family of al-Musayyib. God said: 'We shall make you recite (the Qur'ān) so you shall not forget it,' and 'Remember your Lord when you forget.'"

**Comment:** By holding onto the two verses, he means that God removed forgetfulness from the Prophet, so it is necessary to read it as "cause to be postponed" from *al-nasī'*, meaning to leave or delay. Thus, by saying "Whatever verse We abrogate..." it means removing the verse from practice without removing it from recitation, like the verse of *ṣadaqah al-najwā*. And by saying "or cause to be postponed," it means leaving the

verse and lifting it from them entirely, removing it from both practice and recitation, as its interpretation has been narrated in this manner from Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, Qatādah, and others.

4) In the same source, Ibn al-Anbārī narrated from Abū Dhabyān who said: Ibn ʿAbbās asked us, "Which of the two readings do you consider the first?" We replied, "The reading of ʿAbdullāh and our reading is the latter." He said, "The Messenger of God had Gabriel present the Qur'ān to him once every year in the month of Ramaḍān. And in the last year, he presented it to him twice, so ʿAbdullāh witnessed from it what was abrogated and what was changed."

**Comment:** This meaning is narrated through other channels from Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd himself, and others from the Companions and the Tābiʿūn (Successors). There are other narrations regarding the concept of abrogation.

The essence of what is derived from them is that abrogation can be in ruling, like the abrogated verses that are affirmed in the *Muṣḥaf*. It might also be in recitation, with its ruling being abrogated or without its ruling being abrogated. It was previously discussed in the interpretation of His saying: "*Whatever verse We abrogate...*" (al-Baqarah:106) and it will be discussed in His saying: "When We replace one verse with another..." (al-Naḥl:101) that the two verses are unrelated to the concept of abrogation in the sense of omitting from recitation. It was also previously mentioned in earlier chapters that these narrations contradict the explicit text of the Qur'ān, so the appropriate course is to associate them with the narrations of alteration and to dismiss both sets entirely.

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## Verses 10-15

God has previously described how the disbelievers ridiculed His scripture and His Prophet. They even challenged the authenticity of the Prophethood by demanding that an angel be sent as a testament. In response, God elucidates through three distinct sets of verses:

The set beginning with: *Certainly We sent* (*apostles*) *before you to former communities* (15:10) and extending to the end of verse fifteen. Here, God emphasizes that mocking the Divine Prophets and their teachings is a recurring behavior of the wicked. Their disbelief is persistent, irrespective of the miracles presented to them.

The subsequent set, starting with: *Certainly We have appointed houses*[1] *in the sky and adorned them for the onlookers* (15:16) and going on until verse twenty-five, signifies that the cosmos and our planet are replete with signs. These are sufficient proofs for those with true faith.

The concluding set, commencing with: *Certainly We created man out of a dry clay* (*drawn*) *from an aging mud* (15:26) and proceeding until the chapter's end, delves into the inherent conflict of faith and skepticism in humankind. It expounds on the predicament of the misguided. The inception of humanity exemplifies this, as illustrated by the narrative of Adam's creation. The sequence of events that transpired then, like God's command for the angels to prostrate before Adam and Iblīs's defiance, is highlighted.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي شِيَعِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(15:10-11) Certainly We sent (apostles) before you to former communities, and there did not come to them any apostle but that they used to deride him.

The term *shiya'* (sects) is derived from the singular form *shī'ah*. It represents a group united by a shared doctrine or school of thought. This

1 House: One of the 12 parts into which the heavens are divided in astrology. (Ed.)

term can also be seen in the verse: "*of those who split up their religion and became sects: each faction exulting in what it possessed*" (al-Rūm:32).

The phrase "*We sent*" implicitly refers to God dispatching messengers. The absence of a direct mention that it's God who sent them is because the context makes it clear. More so, the emphasis of the verse is on the institution of prophethood rather than the individual prophets. This verse also illustrates that people of the past mirrored the attitudes of those who followed—they too would often dismiss Divine revelations, ridicule the prophets, and perpetrate wicked deeds. All this is mentioned to reassure the Prophet and to advise him against distress over their rejection and mockery. This sentiment is reiterated later in the chapter: "*Certainly We know that you become upset because of what they say*" (15:97).

Therefore, the essence of this verse is: "Be pleased! We have bestowed upon you the Qur'an, and We shall guard it. Do not be troubled by their words, for it is the established way of the transgressors to behave in such a manner. It has transpired in every community. By My oath, such was the experience of the prophets We dispatched to ancient nations. They too were met with derision from their contemporaries."

كَذَٰلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

> (15:12-13) In that way We insert it into the evildoers' hearts. They do not have belief in it, even though the way of life of the previous peoples has gone before.

The term *sulūk* denotes the act of passing through or inserting one thing into another. This is evident in the phrase: *salaka al-ṭarīq*, which means to tread or pass through a path. There's also the common saying: *salaka al-khayṭ al-ibrah*, referring to the thread being threaded through the needle's eye. Linguistically, the verbs *salaka* and *aslaka* share identical meanings.

Within the expressions "We insert it" and "they do not have belief in it," the pronoun 'it' pertains to the Reminder, explicitly referring to the Qur'an. The essence of this verse is to highlight that the situation of the current messenger mirrors that of his predecessors, who also faced denial, opposition, and mockery. Thus, this Book will be etched into the hearts

of these wrongdoers.

God further conveys to the Prophet that such individuals will always remain in disbelief towards the Qur'an and his prophethood. Their actions echo those of preceding nations who scorned the truth. This sentiment aligns with the verse: "*Their apostles certainly brought them manifest proofs, but they were not the ones to believe in what they had denied earlier*" (al-A'rāf:101).

Some opine that the pronoun 'it' references idolatry (*shirk*) or mockery. They argue that the particle *bā* in "they do not believe in it" (*lā yu'minūn bihi*) implies causation, suggesting the verse means: "We introduce idolatry into the hearts of evildoers or prompt them to mock. Their disbelief stems from their idolatry or mockery..." Such an interpretation, however, seems improbable. The primary function of the particle *bā* is to render the verb transitive, with causation not being its immediate connotation.[1]

Others propose that the first instance of the pronoun 'it' alludes to mockery, while the subsequent usage refers to the Qur'an. According to this perspective, the verses suggest: "We inspire these disbelievers to mock you, just as we did with those before you. They will never believe in the Reminder..."

This interpretation is not problematic, even though it implies a distinction between the antecedents of the two consecutive pronouns (that is, "it"). The context alone demonstrates that it's not feasible to interpret the pronoun "it" in *lā yu'minūn bihi* (they do not believe in it) as referencing mockery.[2]

Some have argued that if the pronoun "it" in the phrase "We insert it" refers to the inspiration to mock, then this would suggest that the idolaters

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1 Editor's note: As an example: Let's take the verb *āmana* which means "he believed." If you say *āmana billāh*, it translates to "he believed in God." Here, the particle "*bā*" is used to make the verb transitive, allowing it to take "God" as its direct object. Without the "*bā*," the sentence would be incomplete because the verb wouldn't have a direct object to refer to. The particle "*bā*" connects the action of believing with what is being believed in.

2 Editor's note: In essence, the author is delving into the nuances of interpretation and how pronouns in the text are to be understood. This is a common exercise in the exegesis (*tafsir*) of religious texts where every word, especially pronouns, can have significant implications for understanding.

are preordained to mock and are compelled to it.

In response to the objection: When God inspires individuals to mock, it suggests that these individuals had already been deeply involved in their malevolent actions prior to this divine inspiration. Their mockery is merely a culmination of their prior misdeeds. The idea of God leading people astray is figurative in nature, with no constraints preventing such an action. What we can confidently assert is that God does not misguide individuals from the onset, and the verse doesn't allude to such a notion. On the contrary, available evidence disputes this idea. To illustrate, this concept parallels the verse: "*Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors*" (al-Baqarah:26). This point has been elaborated upon previously.

Some Qur'anic scholars argue that the phrase 'the way of life of the previous peoples' refers to the path chosen autonomously (by earlier generations), rather than a path designated by God. Given the context in which these verses reprimand those who ridicule the Divine Revelation and offer solace to the Prophet, this interpretation seems most apt.

وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَظَلُّوا فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ لَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ أَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَسْحُورُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

> (15:14-15) Were We to open for them a gate of the sky, so that they could go on ascending through it, they would surely say, 'Indeed a spell has been cast on our eyes; indeed, we are a bewitched lot.'

The term *urūj fī al-samā* refers to ascending to the heavens, while the verb *taskīr* implies being covered (*ghishāwah*) or overshadowed.

The intention behind "opening for them a gate of the sky" is to pave a way through which they can enter the superior world, which is the abode of angels. It doesn't imply, as some believe, a physical ceiling with a door on two flaps that can open and close. This can be related to another verse where God states, "*Then We opened the gates of the sky with pouring water*" (al-Qamar:11).

The Almighty chose this specific miracle from the potential ones that could dispel any doubts from them. The act of opening a gate from the heavens and ascending through it was held in high regard in their eyes, more so than any other miracle. This is evident as when they proposed several

significant miracles, they always culminated with the act of ascending to the heavens as the ultimate one. As depicted in the Qur'an, they said, "*We will never believe you until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the ground, or you ascend into the sky. And even then, we will not believe your ascension until you bring down a book for us to read*" (al-Isrā':90-93). Ascending through the sky and having power over its matters is akin to a book being sent down from it to be read. To sum it up, the notion of a human ascending to the higher realms was the most remarkable miracle in their view.

The heavens serve as the sanctuary for the noble angels. It is the place where Divine judgments and decrees are issued. Within it are the records of destinies, the pathways of various affairs commence, the source of revelations, and the destination where records of human deeds ascend. A human's ascension into the heavens grants him insight into the flow of these affairs, the reasons behind the extraordinary events, the genuine nature of revelation and prophethood, the call to righteousness, both happiness and despair, and in essence, gives him a comprehensive oversight of all truths. This especially holds true if this ascension is continuous and not just a singular event. This notion is hinted at in the Qur'an when it mentions: "*so that they could go on ascending through it.*" Note the use of the continuous form "*they could go on ascending*" instead of referring to a past event.

Opening the gate to the heavens and allowing ascension in this manner enlightens them about the core and roots of this truthful mission. Yet, due to the corruption in their hearts and the entrenched doubts in their souls, they misconceive what they witness. They even accuse the Prophet of bewitching them, believing themselves to be under his spell.

Therefore, the essence of this verse is: "Even if We opened a gateway to the heavens for them, and facilitated their entry into its realm, allowing them to continuously ascend and repeatedly witness its hidden secrets and the celestial nature of things, they would proclaim, 'Our vision has been clouded, and what we observed holds no truth. Indeed, we are a people bewitched.'"

## Verses 16-25

Having previously mentioned the disbelievers' rejection of the Qur'an's miracle and their demand for another miracle, specifically the appearance of angels, God responded by emphasizing its impossibility[1] and the inevitable consequence of their annihilation. He then transitions to highlighting numerous signs in the heavens and the earth that point towards His Oneness, aiming to provide them with a moment of reflection if they truly possess understanding. Through this, He completes His argument against the wrongdoers. Within these verses, God has embedded profound divine knowledge and mystical secrets.

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ
شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾ إِلَّا مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾

(15:16-18) Certainly We have appointed houses in the sky and adorned them for the onlookers, and We have guarded them from every outcast Satan except someone who may eavesdrop, whereat there pursues him a manifest flame.

The term *burūj* is the plural of *burj*, which can be translated as "palace." The celestial abodes of the sun and moon are termed so, metaphorically likening them to palaces, reserved for monarchs.

In the phrases: "adorned them" and "We have guarded them," the pronoun "them" pertains to the sky. This celestial canopy is beautified for the onlookers, presenting a spectacle of splendor and allure that captivates the intellect. The vast expanse of the sky is illuminated with stars, radiant and

1 Editor's note: The term "impossible" in this context doesn't suggest a limitation on God's ability but rather reflects His divine wisdom. The disbelievers' demand for the appearance of angels, if met, would bring immediate judgement. In Islamic understanding, such a manifestation typically signifies profound consequences, such as the onset of the Day of Judgment. The term "impossible" here denotes "against divine wisdom" due to the severe implications it would entail.

twinkling, each varying in brightness and distance. The repeated emphasis in the Qur'an on God's adornment of the sky points to His Divine Guardianship. For instance, there is a verse that reads: "*We have adorned the nearest heaven with lamps, and guarded them*" (Fussilat:12). Further verses elaborate: "*Indeed We have adorned the lowest heaven with the finery of the stars, and to guard from any froward devil. They do not eavesdrop on the Supernal Elite—they are shot at from every side, to drive them away, and there is a perpetual punishment for them—except any who snatches a snatch,*[1] *whereat a piercing flame pursues him*" (al-Ṣāffāt:6-10).

The term *istirāq al-sam'* (to eavesdrop) denotes secretly acquiring information by surreptitiously listening. It is analogous to an individual covertly tuning into others' conversations. This expression particularly pertains to the devils (*shayaṭīn*), referencing their attempts to overhear the discussions between angels, as elaborated in the verses of Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt.

*Shihāb*, or flame, denotes a spark that emerges from fire. Celestial objects visible in the sky are termed so due to their resemblance. A subset of these luminous bodies are stars that can dart momentarily from one point to another. They traverse the sky with remarkable velocity and then fade away.

The essence of this verse seems to suggest: "We have placed palaces in the sky, which is the realm above Earth. These palaces serve as the abodes for the sun and moon. We've embellished them, referring to the sky, for observers using stars and have shielded them from every malicious devil attempting to penetrate and familiarize themselves with the esoteric spiritual realm. The only exceptions are those who covertly listen to the angels' discourse about unseen matters relating to future occurrences and beyond. Nevertheless, we retaliate against them with a piercing flame."

The interpretation of the term "flame" and the implication of pursuing the devils will be elucidated in our commentary on Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt.

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ ﴿١٩﴾

(15:19) And We spread out the earth, and cast on it firm mountains, and We grew on it every kind of balanced thing,

1 That is, of celestial intelligence. (Ed.)

The phrase *madd al-arḍ* (spreading the earth) signifies its expansion in both length and width. This expansion makes the earth suitable for cultivation and habitation. Had God solely blanketed the earth with towering, deeply rooted mountains, the earth wouldn't provide an ideal living environment.

The term *rawāsī* (firm, fixed) describes an object that's not directly mentioned. Still, the implicit meaning of this verse is: "(*We*) *cast on it firm mountains*." This term, the plural of *rāsīyah*, denotes something that is fixed in place. This characteristic suggests that mountains act as stabilizers, preventing the earth from shifting. This idea appears elsewhere in the Qur'an, as seen in: "*He cast into the earth firm mountains lest it shake with you*" (al-Naḥl:15).

*Mawzūn* (balanced, measured) is derived from *wazn* (measure). Initially, this word described weighing an object. Over time, it evolved to refer to any measurement, such as length by spans or arms lengths, or measuring attributes like volume, heat, light, and power. God declares in the Qur'an: "*We shall set up the scales of justice on the Day of Resurrection*" (al-Anbiyā':47). This scale (of justice) measures actions, which don't inherently possess physical weight.

Occasionally, *mawzūn* is used figuratively, signifying something that aligns with its natural purpose and wisdom, neither exceeding nor lacking. Hence, sayings like "his speech is measured" or "his actions are balanced" mean they are apt and fitting.

Given the variations in these expressions, several views have emerged regarding the meaning of the term *mawzūn* in the verse:

(1) God extracted from the earth every measurable mineral, such as gold, silver, and other metals.
(2) God caused various plants to grow from the earth, each with its unique balanced system.
(3) God created every entity with precision and knowledge.

It's crucial to note the phrase, "*every kind of balanced thing*." God didn't specify "every balanced plant." Therefore, the statement encompasses entities beyond plants that emerge from the earth. However, God used the verb *anbatnā* (to grow) in this verse, highlighting plants as one of the entities He nurtured. He could have opted for more general verbs, like *akhrajnā* (we brought forth) or *khalaqnā* (we created), but He chose

not to. The particle *min* primarily signifies a portion. To conclude, this verse alludes to God yielding every balanced entity, covering both plants and minerals, affected by forces like gravity. The verse doesn't exclude interpreting *mawzūn* both literally and figuratively.

In essence, this verse conveys: "We expanded the earth and placed firm mountains upon it to stabilize it. We also produced from it every balanced entity, influenced by forces such as gravity, in quantities determined by divine wisdom."

وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرَازِقِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(15:20) and made in it (various) means of livelihood for you and for those whom you do not provide for.

The term *maʿāyish* (livelihood) is the plural of *maʿīshah*. It refers to what sustains the life of living beings and maintains their existence. This encompasses food, drink, and other essentials required for survival. The term also appears in different infinitive forms like *ʿaysh* (luxury) and *maʿāsh* (earnings).

The phrase, "*for those whom you do not provide for*," has primarily been understood in three distinct ways:

The first interpretation aligns with the understanding of the Kufan grammarians, Yūnus, and al-Akhfash. They assert that a jussive pronoun can be attached without repetition. According to this view, the phrase relates to the pronoun "you" in the genitive case found in the term "for you" (*lakum*).

The second interpretation links it with "livelihood." The suggested implication is: "We provided diverse means of livelihood within it for those whom you sustain," such as servants and domesticated animals.

The third interpretation suggests that the particle *man* (whomever) is the implied subject in the verse. The resultant meaning is: "We established various means of livelihood in it for those whom you do not sustain." All three interpretations, however, present their own set of complexities.

A question emerges: Is it plausible to use the particle *man*, often used for rational beings, for servants and animals in this verse? It's not implausible to interpret this particle as encompassing non-humans, be they plants, animals, or other entities. All seek sustenance akin to rational beings. In the Qur'an, God frequently employs terms typically reserved for rational

beings to refer to non-rational entities when attributes primarily associated with the rational are ascribed to them. For instance, the Qur'anic verse about the idols proclaims: "*Ask them, if they can speak*" (al-Anbiyā':63). Another verse about the idols declares: "*They are indeed hateful to me*" (al-Shuʿarā':77). There are other verses which discuss idols that people worshipped, even though it's unfitting for a non-rational entity to be worshipped. A further example of this linguistic approach is: "*Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the earth, 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!'*" (Fussilat:11). There are numerous other instances of this kind of usage in the Qur'an.

The essence of this verse is: "O mankind! We have established on the earth various essentials for your sustenance, and similarly for others as per their requirements."

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿٢١﴾

**(15:21) There is nothing that does not have its treasures with Us and We only send it down in a known measure.**

The term *khazā'in* (treasures, stores, storehouses) is the plural form of *khazānah*, signifying a place designated for storing, protecting, and conserving wealth. The term *qadar/qadr* (measure, decree, ordainment) is defined as "the specific quantity or amount of a thing."

Within the context of the Qur'anic verse addressing sustenance that sustains both humans and animals, several exegetes have mistakenly identified the "thing" described in the verse with plants and their associated parts, such as seeds and fruits. They infer that *khazānah* (treasures) referred to "with Us" suggests that God dispatches rain in a predetermined measure from the heavens. Consequently, plants emerge, bearing their seeds and fruits, which subsequently become the sustenance for humans and animals. This summarizes their interpretation.

However, there are glaring inconsistencies with this interpretation. Narrowing the meaning of "there is nothing" solely to plants poses challenges, especially given the general scope of the phrase. Such a narrow interpretation inadvertently omits the vast majority of the phrase's referents. There's no textual evidence in the verse's context to warrant such a confinement. Even more perplexing is their labeling of the term "rainfall"

(*maṭar*) in the verse as denoting the treasures of plants.[1] It's evident that rainfall is merely one among several factors that synergistically contribute to plant growth. The term "rain" is appropriate only when water condenses and descends to the earth. Hence, naming it as the treasure of something, especially when neither the rain nor what it purportedly stores exists, is fundamentally flawed.

Some exegetes of the Qur'an have expressed that the phrase "there is nothing that does not have its treasures with Us" denotes the all-encompassing Power of God that subsumes everything. Every kind, be it human beings, horses, date-palm trees, or any other entities, belongs solely to God. Their existence, qualities, consequences, and activities are all known and quantified. They are not infinite. They always remain within the realm of decree and only emerge into reality in a predefined and finite measure.

According to this interpretation, the term "everything" in the phrase signifies the genus of entities, not the individual entities themselves. For instance, it indicates the genus of humanity, not specific individuals like Zayd or Amr. They propose that "a known measure" means the specific quantity of each individual within a certain genus, and "its treasures" implies its existence in that storehouse (or treasury) in terms of divine decree, not in terms of actual manifestation in the tangible world. Hence, this interpretation is akin to an allegorical or metaphorical use of language.

This interpretation seemingly narrows down the purview of this verse without substantiating evidence. It also confines the meaning of *qadr* (measure) to a mere numerical understanding, again without clear justification.

Linguistically, the term *qadr* resonates closely with the Arabic term *ḥadd* (limit). This can be gleaned from the contexts of the ensuing verses:

(1) "Certainly God has set a measure for everything" (al-Ṭalāq:3).
(2) "Everything is by (precise) measure with Him" (al-Ra'd:8).
(3) "Indeed We have created everything in a measure" (al-Qamar:49).
(4) "He created everything and determined it in a precise measure"

1 Editor's note: The clause "*send down in a known measure*" in the original verse can be contextually understood to refer to rain since rain is often sent down in measured amounts to benefit the earth and its inhabitants. However, the verse does not explicitly use the term *maṭar* (rainfall). Some commentators, in their interpretations, seem to equate this "sending down in a known measure" directly with rainfall.

(al-Furqān:2).

Several other verses support this as well.

The above interpretation leans towards a metaphorical meaning without any explicit justification. Moreover, the use of the term *khazā'in* (treasuries or storehouses) in its plural form lacks an apparent reason or nuance.

Some contemporary Qur'anic scholars suggest another perspective. They argue that *khazā'in* refers to the diverse elements from which sustenance and everything else originates. God, in our observable world, has prepared an immense quantity of these elements. This abundance does not decrease despite the continuous process of composition. Factors like light, heat, consistent winds, and others contribute to the formation of various compounds needed to sustain human life and other creatures.

Every one of these components, with their constituent parts and active powers, is stored within these inexhaustible *khazā'in*. Their abundance is due to the sheer volume and the continuous replenishment from new components. This cycle happens when the structure of compounds breaks down through death or decay, reverting to their fundamental elements. For instance, when plants deteriorate or animals die, their components decompose. These constituents then return to their original position within the *khazā'in*, making room for the emergence of new plants and animals that succeed their predecessors.

In the treasures of God lies the essence of light. Specifically, the light of the sun, which gives rise to the day and night, crafts the four seasons, nurtures plants, animals, and all other beings, and guides them towards their existential objectives. Another marvel from God's treasury is the wind, playing a pivotal role in pollinating plants, driving the clouds, altering atmospheres, deflecting detrimental weather, and propelling ships. Water, the life-giving elixir descending from the skies, also emanates from these treasuries, a necessity for every living entity to flourish and persevere. Additionally, the fundamental elements of all compounds are safeguarded in these treasuries. They are either dispatched from these storages independently or as components of other compounds, always in a predetermined quantity and they never deplete.

Given this context, the term "there is nothing" pertains to species in their entirety rather than individual members, a nuance we touched upon previously. This perspective also suggests that "treasures" encompass

everything that exists, inclusive of its foundational elements and causative factors. Each entity finds its place in a specific treasury, negating the idea that all reside within a singular vault. The notion that "We only send it down in a known measure" indicates the presence of a confined quantity of everything at any point in time, opposing the idea that all treasures are released simultaneously.

This perspective, rooted in the nature of these phenomena, is sound based on both scientific evidence and numerous verses from the Qur'an. Several verses corroborate the presented idea:

(1) "We send the fertilizing winds and send down water from the sky providing it for you to drink" (15:22).
(2) "And We made every living thing out of water" (al-Anbiya:30).
(3) "He disposed the sun and the moon for you" (Ibrāhīm:33).
(4) "And the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth" (al-Baqarah:164).

Furthermore, there are numerous other verses in the Qur'an that resonate with the concept presented.

However, while the idea is sound, the context of this verse challenges the given interpretation. This verse is among those addressing the concept of *qadr* (measure, decree, ordainment), and other verses similarly challenge its explanation as plausible. For instance, the following verses wouldn't align with this understanding:

(1) "He created everything and determined it in a precise measure" (al-Furqan:2).
(2) "Who created and proportioned, who determined and guided" (al-A'la:2-3).
(3) "Everything is by (precise) measure with Him" (al-Ra'd:8).
(4) "Except his wife. We ordained her to be among those who remained behind" (al-Naml:57).
(5) "He created him from a drop of (seminal) fluid, and then proportioned him" (Abasa:19).
(6) "Indeed, We sent it down during the Night of Decree" and the subsequent verses of Sūrah al-Qadr.

While this perspective counters some of the issues raised against the previous two interpretations, such as specifying the generality of "everything" (*shay'*) without a definitive basis, there are other concerns as well.

Reflecting upon this verse and the verses parallel to it, it's evident that they are among the most profound words of God. They elucidate a path that's more intricate and profound than the interpretations provided. It conveys that entities manifest through *qadr* (decree, ordainment). This principle serves as the foundation for everything, and all is enveloped within it.

The statement "there is nothing" encompasses everything that can be described as a "thing." The apparent meaning of this phrase implies inclusivity due to its negational context emphasized by the particle "*man*."[1] Nothing is excluded from this term unless the context itself makes an exception. Only God, the concept of possessing something, and treasures are excluded, as indicated by the terms: "Us," "treasures," and "with." Apart from these exceptions, everything falls within the purview of this term, whether visible or not.

Take, for instance, an individual named Zayd, a member of the human race. He falls under the category of 'everything' (*shay'*). Similarly, humanity, as a species present in the world because of its individual members, is also encompassed by this term. The verse affirms that humans possess treasures with God.

Let's expound upon the idea using the example of a hypothetical person named Zayd and his treasures being with God. The matter becomes simpler when we understand that God considers this mentioned thing as descending from Him. Descent implies heights and depths, elevation and descent, like the sky and the earth. However, Zayd, as a creature, doesn't descend from a higher place to a lower one in the observable sense. Therefore, by "descent," it is meant his creation. Yet, he possesses a quality which allows for the term 'descent' to be applicable due to that quality. This is similar to the verses: "*He has sent down for you eight mates of the cattle*" (al-Zumar:6) and "*We sent down iron*" (al-Ḥadīd:25). Both these verses indicate that these things were created.

The statement, "*We only send it down in a known measure,*" tightly couples the notion of descent (which is creation) with measure (*qadr*) in an inseparable manner. The particle '*ba*' in "in a known measure" (*bi-qadar*

1 Editor's note: In Arabic grammar, the particle "*man*" is a multifunctional word that can serve various roles based on its context.

*ma'lūm*) is for one of these three reasons:

(1) To signify a cause
(2) To denote an instrument
(3) To represent something accompanying something else

Whichever meaning we choose, the outcome remains that Zayd's existence is solely in a predetermined measure. His existence is therefore confined. Evidence for his confined existence can be found in the verse: "*He indeed comprehends all things*" (Fussilat:54). It's impossible to encompass something that is infinite.

This predestined (or known) measure is the very reason that defines and distinguishes a thing. In Zayd, for instance, there's a characteristic that distinguishes him from 'Amr and others, and differentiates him from horses, cows, the earth, and the sky. It allows us to say that he isn't 'Amr, nor a horse, cow, earth, or sky. Without this distinction, everything would be the same, and differentiation would cease to exist.[1]

Moreover, his inherent faculties, effects, and actions are all limited and proportioned. For instance, his sight isn't absolute, being unable to perceive every condition, spanning every time, every location, and every entity, or using any bodily organ he wishes. Instead, it's limited to a specific condition, period, place, object, and organ, all under distinct prerequisites. Were his sight absolute, it would encompass every form of seeing, making everything visible to him. The same principle extends to all his other existential attributes and consequences.

From this, it becomes evident that *qadr* (measure, decree) signifies the unique essence and manner of a thing's creation. This can be inferred from the verses: "*Who created and proportioned, who determined and guided*" (al-A'lā:2-3), as well as "*He who gave everything its creation and then guided*" (20:50). The first verse implies that guidance, signifying directing everything to its existential purpose, results from the thing's creation, proportioning, and determination. The latter verse indicates that this guidance

1 Editor's note: The concept discussed uses Zayd as a symbolic figure to illustrate that when God speaks of "descent," it refers not to a literal movement but to creation. The notion of "sending down in a known measure" emphasizes the predetermined nature of creation. Zayd's existence, like all things, has a defined measure. This measure differentiates one creation from another, ensuring each has its unique identity.

follows God endowing everything with its distinct attributes. The verses' contexts highlight that these unique attributes, inseparable from their entities, necessarily ensue from the act of decreeing.

After describing this, God portrays every entity's destiny as discernible, as He states, "We only send it down in a known measure." According to the verse's context, this indicates that every entity's destiny is predetermined and recognized even before its existence is finalized and manifested. This is echoed in the verse: "*Everything is by precise measure with Him*" (al-Ra'd:8). Hence, one can infer that this verse's apparent meaning is God's knowledge of everything's measure. The phrase "by precise measure with Him" in the aforementioned verse carries the same essence as "in a known measure" in the verse under consideration. Another similar sentiment is expressed in: "*Certainly Allah has set a measure for everything*" (al-Ṭalāq:3). This communicates that nothing surpasses the measure God has set for it, and this measure is definite and clear. In essence, God's decree, in terms of knowledge and will, precedes the actual entity, even if it's inseparable from it in reality.

God further elaborates that every creation's essence lies with Him before it enters this world, as highlighted in the verse. The quantification of everything occurs before they are stored as treasures with Him and is paired when they descend into this realm. Hence, when everything is stored as treasures with God, they remain unquantified and unlimited.

The term *khazā'in* (treasures) comprises two elements. Firstly, it signifies them being above any measurable realm. Secondly, it indicates their transcendence beyond countable quantities. Numbers are meant for finite entities, and these treasures, being infinite, are undistinguishable and unified.

This clarifies that some treasures hold precedence over others. The elevated ones aren't confined and quantified as per the ones below them. Collectively, no worldly limit bounds them. The notion of "sending down" in the verse may suggest a progressive descent. "We only send it down" signifies this descent through various phases, each introducing a new decree. God mentions, "*Has there been for man a period of time when he was not anything worthy of mention*?" (al-Insān:1), indicating humanity's prior insignificance.

Each treasure is beyond our tangible realm, for God has portrayed them

as being with Him. Another verse states, "*That which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last*" (al-Naḥl:96). Thus, it becomes clear that what's with God is eternal, unchanged, and undecaying. In contrast, entities in our perceivable realm are transient and mutable. Conclusively, these divine treasures transcend our observable realm.

By reflecting upon this verse, we discern its profound meaning. Though the verse contains intricate and perplexing aspects, through contemplation, its essence becomes evident, likened to the Qur'an's clearer revelations. Those struggling with its depth can lean on our third interpretation as the most reliable. We shall revisit the topic of decree in more detail in a fitting context, God willing.[1]

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَاحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

(15:22) And We send the fertilizing winds and send down water from the sky providing it for you to drink and you are not maintainers of its resources.

The term *lawāqiḥ* is the plural of *lāqiḥah*, originating from *laqḥ*. When it's said: *laqaḥa al-nakhl laqḥan*, it refers to placing the pollen—which is the essence of male date palms—onto the female palms for fruit-bearing. Modern botanical studies confirm the duality of plants, recognizing male and female entities, with winds transporting pollen from male plants to fertilize the females. This is exemplified by God's statement: "*And We send the fertilizing winds.*"

The statement: "*and send down water from the sky providing it for you to drink*" alludes to rain descending from clouds. Contemporary scientific research agrees that Earth's water comes primarily from the rain, contrasting ancient beliefs of water being an incomplete sphere enveloped by the Earth, perceived as one of the four fundamental elements.

This verse, through its initial part: "*And We send the fertilizing winds*,"

1 Editor's note: The above discussion emphasizes God's complete knowledge and predetermined measurement of all things. The term "*khazā'in*" denotes divine treasures beyond human comprehension, representing eternal, unchanging entities. Through reflection, these teachings shed light on the intricate design and boundless wisdom of the Divine.

affirms the duality and fertilization of plants. Its subsequent part: "*and send down water from the sky providing it for you to drink*," demonstrates that Earth's stored waters eventually become rain. The preceding divine statement: "*We only send it down in a known measure*" suggests that measurements play a significant role in plant growth. This insight, which the Holy Qur'an presented ahead of scientific discoveries, is deemed miraculous or is the miracle itself.

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيِي وَنُمِيتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(15:23) Indeed it is We who give life and bring death and We are the inheritors.

This verse delineates the concept of exclusivity, illustrating that all forms of governance and management are within the domain of God. Anything besides Him is regarded as a blessing. Consider the sky with its majestic constellations, the earth punctuated by towering mountains, the calibrated growth of all things, the provision of sustenance, the dispatch of winds that fertilize, and the descent of water from the heavens. God's system, anchored in wisdom and knowledge, is complete only when it encompasses life, death, and resurrection. Some erringly assume that certain manifestations of life and death are not from God. This verse counters such misconceptions, accentuating that it is solely He who grants life and administers death.

Subsequently, the verse pronounces, "*and We are the inheritors.*" Essentially, this denotes that We shall persist after you all have passed away, having consumed the life's provisions We graced you with. It is as if God conveys: "The orchestration of your affairs is within Our purview, and We envelop you in all aspects. We breathed life into you when you were nonexistent, thus We precede you. And We cause you to die and inherit all that was yours, thereby We remain post your existence."

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(15:24) Certainly We know the predecessors among you and certainly We know the successors,

The prior verses enumerated the Divine Bounties and portrayed God's orchestration, directing towards elucidating His Oneness through His

Lordship. It's evident that without His all-encompassing Knowledge, there wouldn't be any creation or system in place, particularly His knowledge pertaining to those He grants life to and those He decrees death upon. Following these, this current verse sheds light on God's Knowledge regarding those individuals who emerged early in existence and those who came subsequently. This understanding is derived from the verse's context.

Some believe that the term 'predecessors' pertains to those who were ahead in performing virtuous deeds. Another perspective suggests it signifies those who would stand at the forefront during battles. There's also an interpretation that it indicates those positioned in the front row during congregational prayers, with the term 'successors' denoting those who stand behind them. However, each of these views lacks substantial credibility.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

(15:25) and indeed it is your Lord who will resurrect them. Indeed He is all-wise, all-knowing.

The verse conveys a sense of exclusivity, emphasizing that only God will gather individuals on the Day of Resurrection, and not anyone else; He alone is their Lord.

Some interpret that in scenarios of exclusivity, the action itself is generally agreed upon, and the dispute lies in identifying the executor of the action. However, that's not the situation here; the contention is over whether the gathering on the Day of Resurrection will occur at all.

Those who object in this manner point out that the verse switches its focus from addressing the general populace in the preceding verses to specifically addressing the Prophet (in this verse). The verse states: "*and indeed it is your Lord who will resurrect them,*" as opposed to saying, "Indeed, Your Lord will gather you all." This shift occurs even though the Prophet has already accepted the principle that God will indeed gather everyone on the Day of Resurrection.

This transition in the verse elucidates why the point of view changes—from speaking in the first person plural to the third person when viewed from the Prophet's perspective, and from the second person to the third person when seen from the people's vantage point.

The verse culminates with the phrase, "*Indeed He is all-wise,*

*all-knowing*." This underscores the idea that the act of resurrection is rooted in wisdom, as wisdom necessitates that actions be accounted for, that the virtuous be rewarded for their goodness, and the wrongdoers be penalized for their sins. Moreover, it is contingent on God's knowledge, ensuring that no one will be wronged.

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## Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, one of the infallibles was asked concerning the verse, "*Indeed, We have appointed houses in the sky.*" He replied: These refer to the abodes (or stations) of the sun and the moon.

(2) Additionally, in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, one of the infallibles was asked concerning the verse, "*Except someone who may eavesdrop, whereat there pursues him a manifest flame.*" He replied: The devils used to ascend to the heavens and spy until the birth of the Prophet.

(3) In *Ruh al-maʿānī*, a narration from al-Barqī, from his father, from his grandfather, from al-Bazantī, from Abān, from Imām al-Ṣādiq states: Iblīs used to penetrate all seven heavens. However, when Jesus was born, he was blocked from three heavens and could only penetrate four. When the Messenger of God was born, he was prevented from all seven heavens, and the devils were driven away by the stars.

**Author's comment:** The hadīth illuminates the profound spiritual transformations that unfolded with the births of Prophets Jesus and Muhammad, significantly affecting the capabilities of Iblīs and the devils in the celestial realms.

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh reports from Ibn Masʿūd, who said that Jarīr b. ʿAbdullāh asked the Messenger of God about the lowest heaven and the lowest earth. The Messenger of God replied: "As for the lowest heaven, God created it from smoke and then elevated it. He placed within it a radiant lamp and a luminous moon, adorned it with the lamps of stars, and made it a means to drive away the devils. He protected it from every accursed devil."

**Author's comment:** More clarifications on the meaning of these narrations will follow, God willing.

(5) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, one of the infallibles was asked concerning

the verse, "*and made in it* (*various*) *means of livelihood for you*," He replied: For every kind of creature, something is preordained.

(6) Furthermore, in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, in a narration from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, "*We grew in it every kind of balanced thing*," it is stated that God caused to grow in the mountains gold, silver, gems, sulfur, copper, iron, lead, antimony, arsenic, and the like, which are only sold by weight.

**Author's comment:** The text and its chain of narrators should be understood in a way that explains some of the realities mentioned, given the weaknesses in both the text and its chain of narrators.

(7) In *Rawdah al-wāʿiẓīn* by Ibn al-Fārīs, on the authority of Imām al-Ṣādiq from Imām al-Bāqir that the Messenger of God said: "In the Throne is a representation of all that God has created in the land and the sea." This is an interpretation of the verse, "*There is nothing that does not have its treasures with Us*."

(8) In *Ruh al-maʿānī*, through its chain of narration, Muqātil b. Sulaymān reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq, that when Mūsā ascended the mount and called upon his Lord, the Exalted, he said: "O Lord, show me Your treasuries." God replied: "O Mūsā, my depositories are such that when I wish for something to exist, I say 'Be,' and it becomes."

(9) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, both al-Bazzār and Ibn Mardawayh reported on the topic of grandeur from Abū Huraira, who said that the Messenger of God stated: "The treasuries of God are His speech. So when He desires something, He says to it: 'Be,' and it becomes."

**Author's comment:** These last three narrations corroborate what we have previously established about the meaning of the verse. The intent behind the word "Be" is the command for creation, which brings things into existence. This supports the idea that the verse is general in scope, as understood by the companions and the people of the time when the verse was revealed. This is further substantiated by what is reported in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from Muʿāwiya who said, "Do you not know that the Book of God is the truth?" They replied, "Yes." He continued, "Then read this verse, '*There is nothing that does not have its treasures with Us.*' Do you not believe in this and know that it is the truth?"

They replied, "Yes." He then said, "So how do you blame me after this?" al-Aḥnaf stood up and said, "O Muʿāwiya, we do not blame you for what is in God's treasuries, but we blame you for what God has sent down from His treasuries and you have stored it in your own treasuries and locked your door on it." Muʿāwiya remained silent.

(10) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Hākim reported from Marwān b. al-Hakam who said: "There were people who would deliberately stand at the back of the prayer rows because of women. Consequently, God revealed the verse, '*Certainly We know the predecessors among you and certainly We know the successors.*'"

**Author's Comment:** It is also narrated in the source from Abū al-Jawzā' from Ibn ʿAbbās who said: "There was a beautiful woman who used to pray behind the Messenger of God. Some people would hasten to stand in the front row to avoid seeing her, while others would deliberately stand in the back. When they bowed in prayer, they would look under their armpits. Hence, God revealed, '*Certainly We know the predecessors among you and certainly We know the successors.*'"

The verse does not directly pertain to the situations described in these two narrations, neither in terms of wording nor the context in which it was revealed. This is apparent.

(11) In another instance, Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported through Muʿtamir b. Sulaymān from Shuʿayb b. ʿAbd al-Malik from Muqātil b. Sulaymān regarding the verse, '*Certainly We know the predecessors among you,*' he said: "We have heard that this was revealed concerning fighting." Muʿtamir then reported to his father, who said, "This verse was revealed before fighting was prescribed."

**Author's Comment:** This means that it is a Meccan verse.

(12) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, Jabir reports from Imām al-Bāqir who said regarding the verse, '*Certainly We know the predecessors among you and certainly We know the successors,*' "These are the believers from this nation."

(13) In *Tafsīr al-burhān*, al-Shaybānī in *Nahj al-bayān* reports from Imām al-Ṣādiq: "Those who have come first are the ones with good deeds, and those who will come later are the ones with bad deeds."

## Verses 26-48

This is the third set of verses following those at the commencement of this chapter, wherein the idolators mocked the Book and the Prophet and proposed to him a miracle other than the Qur'an. In this section, God, the Exalted, mentions the initial creation of humans and the jinn. He recounts His command to the angels and Iblīs to prostrate to Adam, their compliance, and Iblīs's refusal, being of the jinn, leading to his expulsion. It also describes Iblīs's vow to mislead the descendants of Adam. These verses conclude by addressing God's decree regarding the felicity of the righteous and the wretchedness of those who go astray.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

(15:26) Certainly We created man out of a dry clay (drawn) from an aging mud,

al-Rāghib states in his *al-Mufradāt*: "The primary meaning of *ṣalṣāl* is the echoing sound produced by a dry object. Hence, we have the phrase *ṣal al-mismār* (echo of a nail). Dry clay is termed *ṣalṣāl*. The Almighty says: '*He created man out of dry clay, like the potter's*' (al-Raḥmān:14) and '*Certainly We created man out of a dry clay* (*drawn*) *from an aging mud.*' The term *ṣalṣālah* refers to the residue of water. It is named as such due to the echoing sound it makes when moved within a container. Some also opine that *ṣalṣāl* refers to the foul odor emanating from clay, drawing a parallel with the phrase *ṣalla al-laḥm* (the meat decayed)."

He elaborates on the term *ḥam'ah* as well, saying, "It denotes foul-smelling black clay. As for the phrase, 'from an aging mud,' some interpret it as undergoing a transformation. The term *lam yatasannahu* implies that it hasn't changed, with the particle '*ha*' indicating a state of rest."

This verse sheds light on the initial stages of human creation. Evidence lies in the verse: "*He commenced man's creation from clay. Then He made his progeny from an extract of a base fluid*" (al-Sajdah:7-8). This verse delineates the creation of the human species and their emergence on Earth. The creation of the very first human mirrors the creation of subsequent ones.

Mankind's entirety originated from the first, suggesting that all humans share a common mode of creation.

The author of *Majma' al-bayyān al-bayān* elucidates: "The foundational substance from which Adam was formed was from the soil, as evident from the verse: '*He created him from dust*' (Āl 'Imrān:59). This dust was then transformed into clay, corroborated by the verse: '*You created him from clay*' (al-A'rāf:12). This clay was then allowed to change until it became limp, as referred to in the verse: '*We created man out of a dry clay* (*drawn*) *from an aging mud.*' Eventually, this mixture was left until it desiccated, which is indicated by the phrase, '*We created man out of a dry clay.*' Hence, it is evident that these descriptions do not contradict but rather represent different phases of human creation."

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ ﴿٢٧﴾

(15:27) and We created the jinn earlier, out of a piercing fire.

al-Rāghib states: "*al-samūm* is a hot wind that has a poisonous effect."

The root of the word *jinn* is to hide or cover. This meaning extends to all the derivatives of the word, including *jinn*, *majannah* (shield), *jannah* (paradise), *janīn* (fetus), *janān* (with the opening meaning heart), *janna 'alayhi al-layl* (the night enveloped him), and others.

The *jinn* are a hidden group of beings by nature, not visible to our senses. They have feelings and free will. The Noble Qur'an frequently mentions them and attributes to them wondrous deeds and swift movements, as seen in the story of Solomon. They have obligations, they live, die, and will be resurrected. Numerous scattered verses in the words of the Almighty indicate all of this.

As for the term *jānn*, the question arises: does it refer specifically to the *jinn*? Or does it refer to the father of the *jinn*, much like Adam is the father of humans? Some reports suggest it could be Iblīs himself, as per Imām al-Ḥasan's narration. Or perhaps *jānn* refers to the progeny of Iblīs among the *jinn*. Or maybe it's a specific kind of *jinn* as mentioned by al-Rāghib. These are various opinions with little conclusive evidence for most.

What seems clear from contemplating the Qur'anic verses is that God is contrasting two distinct species in these verses: He juxtaposes *insān* (human) with *jānn*, presenting them as two distinct species with no

intrinsic connection in their creation. This interpretation is also reflected in the verse: "*He created man out of dry clay, like the potter's, and created the jinn out of a flame of fire*" (al-Raḥmān:14-15).

Contextually, the verses under scrutiny clearly suggest that Iblīs belonged to the jinn. Otherwise, the mention of the statement: "*and We created the jinn earlier, out of a piercing fire*" would be meaningless. In another passage, God distinctly states about Iblīs: "*He was one of the jinn, so he transgressed against his Lord's command*" (al-Kahf:50). Hence, the term *jān* in this verse either denotes the jinn as a whole or a specific category within the jinn. This is the sole instance in the Qur'an where this term appears. Everywhere else, the term *jinn* is employed, even in contexts that encompass both Iblīs and his counterparts. For instance, God proclaims: "*the devils from among humans and jinn*" (al-Anʿām:112). Another verse goes: "*And the word became due against them, as it did against the nations that passed away before them of jinn and humans*" (Fussilat:25). There's also the verse: "*O company of jinn and humans! If you can pass through the confines of the heavens and the earth, then do pass through it. But you will not pass through except by an authority*" (al-Raḥmān:33).

The apparent juxtaposition between humans (*insān*) and the *jān* in some verses and between humans and *jinn* in others indicates that the terms *jinn* and *jān* refer to the same entity. This is evident.

When comparing the verse, "Indeed, We created man from a dry clay, (drawn) from an aging mud," to the verse, "And We created the *jinn* earlier, from a piercing fire," it becomes clear that the latter verse discusses the original creation of the *jinn* and their emergence as a distinct species. This is analogous to the creation of humans from dry clay. A question arises: Is the subsequent creation of the *jinn* lineage similar to the creation of the first *jinn*, specifically, from a piercing fire? This contrasts with human creation where the first human was formed from earth, while subsequent generations came from his sperm. The Qur'an does not explicitly mention this. Yet, it does refer to the progeny of *Iblīs* in the verse: "*Will you then take him and his offspring for guardians in My stead?*" (al-Kahf:50).

Another verse associates mortality with both humans and *jinn*: "*And the word became due against them, as it did against the nations that passed away before them of jinn and humans*" (Fussilat:25). It's commonly understood that any species which has offspring and experiences death

reproduces. A subsequent question is: Do the *jinn* reproduce similarly to humans through copulation, or do they have a different reproductive method?

The phrase in the verse, "*And We created the jinn earlier*," is an annexation construction. However, its relation isn't specified. The comprehensive interpretation of this verse is that the *jinn* were created before mankind. This understanding stems from the context comparing the two species.[1]

The verse states that the *jinn* were initially created from a piercing flame. This doesn't conflict with the verse which says: "*and created the jinn out of a flame of fire*" (al-Raḥmān:15). A flame of fire here denotes a flame accompanied by smoke. Combining insights from these two verses, it's inferred that the *jinn*'s creation began with a piercing flame that ignited, becoming a smokeless flame of fire.

Consequently, the essence of these two verses (15:26-27) is: "By oath, We commenced the creation of the human species from a dry clay, which previously was a malodorous liquid. We initiated the creation of the *jinn* species from a piercing flame that ignited and transformed into a flame of fire."

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

(15:28) When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am going to create a human out of a dry clay (drawn) from an aging mud.'

al-Rāghib states: "The term *bashrah* (epidermis) means the outer layer of the skin, while *admah* denotes what lies beneath it. The majority of linguists opine that humanity is termed *bashar* because their skin is exposed and not enveloped by hair, setting them apart from other animals whose skins are veiled by wool, fur, or fluff. Interestingly, both the singular and plural forms of the word *bashar* (human) are identical. This term is employed in the Qur'an as seen in: '*Shall we believe two humans*

1 Editor's note: In terms of interpretation, this means that although the direct grammatical construction doesn't specify the exact nature of the temporal relationship, the surrounding context allows for a comprehensive understanding—thus, the conclusion that jinn were created before humans is derived from the overall comparison of the two entities within the Qur'anic narrative.

*like ourselves?*' (al-Mu'minūn:47). Notably, every instance in the Qur'an that touches upon human appearance utilizes the word *bashar*. An example being: '*It is He who created the human being* (bashar) *from water*' (al-Furqān:54)."

The passage commencing with, "*When your Lord said to the angels*," has an implicit verb, making the complete meaning: "Remember when your Lord said to the angels...." This verse intriguingly transitions from the personal plural to the third person. This is analogous to our earlier discussion on the verse: "*and indeed, it is your Lord who will resurrect them,*" (15:25) where the verse addresses those who harbor doubts about resurrection. This verse also sheds light on the Day of Resurrection, eternal felicity, and perpetual distress.

The utilization of the first-person plural in preceding verses like "We created man" and "We created the jinn" is emblematic of majesty. This style of speech is frequently observed among the nobility when they speak of themselves, their aides, and their subordinates, symbolizing their elevated stature. In this context, God views the noble angels as mediums executing His commands in these matters. Yet, they don't assist Him in the act of creating Adam. This is evident as they are the recipients of the message, learning about God's will to create Adam and subsequently being instructed to prostrate before him after He shapes him and breathes His spirit into him. The essence of the verse is self-evident.

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(15:29) So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him.'

The term *taṣwīyah* refers to the act of making something stable and well-proportioned, ensuring that each part is in its appropriate place and condition. Likewise, when speaking of the human body, *taṣwīyah* implies the precise arrangement of limbs and organs in their appropriate positions and states.

The words: "*Indeed I am going to create a human out of a dry clay* (*drawn*) *from an aging mud. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him*," possibly refer to the gradual formation of the first human body. Initially, the act of creation (*khalq*) assembled the various parts of the human being. Then

came the act of proportioning (*taṣwīyah*), which involved placing each part in its suitable place and condition. Lastly, the act of breathing (*nafkh*) of the spirit into the human occurred. This interpretation does not conflict with the verse "*He created him from dust, then said to him, 'Be', and he was*" (Āl 'Imrān:59). The phrase, "*then said to him, 'Be', and he was*," pertains to the creation of the human spirit or soul, not the physical body. This idea aligns with another Qur'anic verse which, after describing the gradual creation of the human body, states: *Then We produced him as* (*yet*) *another creature* (al-Mu'minūn:14).[1]

The term *nafkh* generally means the act of blowing air into a body, either through the mouth or some other means. In the context of these verses, it metaphorically represents the divine act of originating the human spirit and linking it to the body. The spirit isn't literally inside the body like air blown into a vessel. This concept is further elaborated in the verses: "*Then We made him a drop of* (*seminal*) *fluid* (*lodged*) *in a secure abode. Then We created the drop of fluid as a clinging mass. Then We created the clinging mass as a fleshy tissue. Then We created the fleshy tissue as bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We produced him as* (*yet*) *another creature*" (al-Mu'minūn:13-14). Another relevant verse is: "*Say, 'You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with you. Then you will be brought back to your Lord*'" (al-Sajdah:11).

The first set of verses illustrates that the human spirit is essentially connected to the body but without any addition to it. The second set indicates that although the spirit leaves the body at the time of death, nothing is physically removed from the body.

Therefore, the spirit exists independently but has a form of attachment to the body. This connection ceases upon death, and the spirit is separated from the body. We have touched upon these concepts in our commentary on the verse: "*And do not call those who were slain in Allah's way 'dead*'" (al-Baqarah:154), in the first volume of this book. We plan to further explore this topic in our forthcoming commentary on "*Say, 'The Spirit is of the command of my Lord*'" (Al-Isrā':85),[2] God willing.

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1 Editor's note: This verse also implies that the beginning of the soul or spirit was the body itself.

2 See Eng. vol. 25. (Ed.)

In the verse (under discussion), God bestows honor upon the spirit by referring to it as *My spirit*. This form of annexation not only serves as a means of honoring the spirit but also emphasizes God's ownership of it.

The phrase in the verse, "*then fall down in prostration before him*," explicitly directs the angels to prostrate to Adam. It's plausible to interpret this part of the verse as meaning "fall down upon the ground in prostration before him." If this interpretation holds, it highlights the importance for the angels to exhibit humility towards this new creation.

The comprehensive meaning of the verse thus becomes: "Once I have properly proportioned him, completed the creation of his physical body, and brought into being the noble spirit—associated with Myself—and attached it to his body, then fall upon the ground in prostration before him!"

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

(15:30-31) Thereat the angels prostrated, all of them together, but not Iblīs: he refused to be among those who prostrated.

The terms *'ajma'ūn* (all of them) and *kulluhum* are both used for emphasis, with the latter intensifying the former. This conveys that all the angels, without exception, prostrated before Adam. The sole exception was Iblīs. However, he wasn't considered among the angels, as corroborated by the verse: "*He was one of the jinn so he transgressed against his Lord's command*" (al-Kahf:50). Some commentators have proposed an unlikely interpretation that a subset of angels were termed as jinn, and Iblīs was among this group. Others have mistakenly interpreted "jinn" in this context to mean "covered creation," encompassing both angels and other beings. Such interpretations are not plausible. As we've previously explained in our commentary on Sūrah al-Ā'rāf, Iblīs was commanded to prostrate before Adam, even though he wasn't one of the angels. The meaning of these verses is clear.

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ أَلَّا تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(15:32) He said, 'O Iblīs! What kept you from being among those who have prostrated?'

The phrase, *mā laka* (what kept you)[1] in the verse integrates both a subject and a predicate, translating to "what is that with you?" In this verse, the phrase *allā takūn* (from being) exemplifies the omission of the jussive particle (*naz' al-khāfiz*). This phrase essentially asks, "Why weren't you among those who prostrated?" Clearly, those who prostrated refer to the angels. Thus, the essence of this verse is: "What held you back from joining those who prostrated?"

قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

(15:33) Said he, 'I will not prostrate before a human whom You have created out of a dry clay (drawn) from an aging mud.'

In the phrase "I was not to prostrate," (*lam akun li-asjuda* ) as opposed to saying "I will not prostrate" (*lā asjudu*) or "I am not prostrating (*lastu asjudu*)," there is an implication that his refusal to prostrate is intrinsic to his nature.[2] It is as if it was expected of him if one were to truly understand his essence. This verse indirectly conveys what is explicitly stated in another verse, "*I am better than him: You created me from fire, and You created him from clay*" (al-A'rāf:12).

We've previously examined the implications of prostrating before Adam, God's directive to the angels and Iblīs, the compliance of the angels, and the defiance of Iblīs. For further insight, one can refer to our *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-A'rāf.[3]

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (﴿٣٤﴾) وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴿٣٥﴾

1 Editor's note: In Arabic, this phrase serves as an interrogative expression that literally means "what is for you?" or "what is that with you?." Here, "*mā*" is an interrogative particle that asks about the nature or identity of something, and "*laka*" is a prepositional phrase, where "*la-*" means "for" and "-ka" is a possessive pronoun meaning "you." So, the phrase "*mā laka*" is integrated as both subject and predicate, encapsulating the idea of asking about something that concerns or belongs to you.

2 Editor's note: Both phrases could be used to indicate a refusal to prostrate, but they carry slightly different nuances. *Lā asjudu* is a straightforward expression of refusal, whereas *lastu asjudu* suggests a more inherent or characteristic refusal, as if to say prostrating is not something that one does by nature.

3 Eng. volumes 1 & 15 respectively. (Ed.)

(15:34-35) He said, 'Begone hence, for you are indeed an outcast, and indeed the curse shall lie on you until the Day of Retribution.'

The term *rajīm* (outcast) follows the *fa'īl* pattern, signifying something that has been acted upon. *Rajm* means to drive away, and it has commonly been used in the context of driving someone away using stones and pebbles. The term *la'n* (curse) signifies driving someone away from mercy.

From this, it becomes apparent that His statement, "*and indeed the curse shall lie on you until the Day of Retribution,*" serves as an elucidation for His previous statement, "*you are indeed an outcast.*" The act of *rajm* (driving away) led to his expulsion from the midst of the angels in the heavens or from a divine position.[1] In essence, he was driven away from a station of closeness, a level of God's unique mercy. This implies being distanced from God's mercy, which the act of *la'n* (cursing) embodies.

In another passage of the Qur'an, the Glorious attributes this curse imposed on Iblīs to Himself: "*And indeed My curse will be on you till the Day of Retribution,*" (Ṣād:78). In both verses, the duration of the curse is specifically mentioned to last "until the Day of Judgment."

The general imposition of the curse on him in the statement "*the curse shall lie on you*" is because every act of disobedience is linked to Iblīs. There is no act of disobedience wherein Iblīs doesn't play a part, either by temptation or by whispering. He is the root cause of every sin, and every curse that accompanies these sins, even directly affecting the individuals who commit these sins, traces back to him. This recalls what has been mentioned in relation to another verse, "*So that Allah may separate the bad ones from the good, and place the bad on one another, and pile them up together, and cast them into hell. It is they who are the losers,*" (al-Anfal:37).

Sending a *la'n* (curse), when done by anyone other than God, essentially acts as a *du'ā* (supplication) wishing for someone to be removed from God's mercy. In essence, the one who enacts this distancing from His mercy is God Himself. Therefore, this is an emphatic way to express

1 Editor's note: Before the command to prostrate before Adam, Iblīs and the angels were in the station of sanctity with no distinction. However, they later split: the angels continued in humble servitude and obedience to God as depicted in the Qur'an, while Iblīs deviated from this path, separating himself from the angels.

the denial of mercy.

The author of *Majma' al-bayyān* comments, "Some Qur'anic exegetes have observed that the word *la'nah* (cursing) is mentioned with the definite article in the phrase 'indeed the curse shall lie on you.' Yet, in another verse from Sūrah Sād, it is phrased as 'My curse' in a possessive form. This is due to its preceding phrase, 'to what I created with My own Hands.' Since the phrase 'My own Hands' is possessive, 'My Curse' in this verse follows suit. Earlier, it was said: 'O Iblīs! What prevented you from being among the *sājidīn* (those who prostrate)?' This verse uses the definitive form for the word *sājidīn*. The definitive form is also used for the word *insān* (man) in 'We created man' and for *jinn* in 'We created the jinn.'" The author concludes that this verse clarifies that Iblīs was never a believer.

The verse highlights that the act of *la'nah* (cursing) is limited until the Day of Retribution. This limitation implies that the curse stems from the self-inflicted spiritual harm and maladies due to one's transgressions before God. The opportunity for such wrongdoings concludes with the Day of Retribution, signaling the end of this world of action, in contrast to the hereafter, a realm of recompense. In essence, this life is where deeds are noted, and the Day of Retribution is the time for accountability and just compensation.

Several Qur'anic commentators interpret the limited duration of the curse until the Day of Retribution as evidence of its cessation on that day. The verse's apparent meaning suggests that retribution will transpire on that particular day. This interpretation is reinforced by the reference to the Day of Judgement as the Day of Retribution in this verse, implying Iblīs's curse lasts until then, followed by his punishment. If the retribution were to end prior to this day, it would be referred to as the "Day When Retribution Ceased," rather than the Day of Retribution.

To address the ambiguity surrounding the ultimate end, some suggest that it represents the furthest limit set by the creation. This is analogous to the verse: "*They shall remain in it for as long as the heavens and the earth endure*" (Hūd:107). As you can observe, you have already understood its meaning, as discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah Hūd.[1]

1 Editor's note: In the exegesis of Ch. 11, verse 107, the author says: "God links the permanence of Heaven and Hell and their inhabitants to the persistence of the heavens and earth because the heavens and earth, in their general sense

One could contend that the curse alluded to in the verse pertains to the curse of creation, set to end with the Day of Judgment. However, this stands in contrast to the eternal nature of the Divine curse and God's act of distancing someone from His Mercy. This perspective seemingly overlooks the verse from Sūrah Ṣād, which states, "*And indeed My curse will be on you till the Day of Retribution*" (Ṣād:78).

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قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**(15:36) He said, 'My Lord! Respite me till the day they will be resurrected.'**

The term *indhār* signifies granting a respite. Iblīs initiated his conversation with God using the address, *my Lord*, as he was making a supplication. Despite his concurrent arrogance, defiance, and disobedience towards God, he was compelled to address God in a manner invoking His boundless mercy due to his supplicatory stance. He sought God, invoking His dominion over him, hoping for His response, even in his defiance.

Iblīs's plea to God starts with the particle *fā*, which leads the sentence "Respite me." This indicates his intent to target all humans, not just Adam. As noted in our exegesis of verses in Sūrah al-Ā'rāf, Iblīs was directed to prostrate to all humans, with Adam merely symbolizing them as the focal point for this act. This is evident from the verse: "*Certainly We created you, then We formed you, then We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam.' So they* (*all*) *prostrated, but not Iblīs*" (al-A'rāf:11). The angels were instructed to prostrate to humanity at large, not just the individual, Adam.[1] This prostration was not just a symbolic act; it had a profound purpose. It was a gesture of the angels' inherent humility towards humans, reflecting

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(in that they will be transformed into a new heavens and a new earth in the hereafter), are eternal and not transient. However, these heavens and earth that we experience in this world will come to an end based on the observable order. As for the heavens that shade Heaven, for instance, and the earth that carries it, which are illuminated by the light of their Lord, they are permanent and never fading. The universe will never be devoid of them" (Eng. vol. 21).

1 Editor's note: Adam was setup as the *qiblah* (direction) for their prostration much like the Ka'bah which is set as a direction in worship and is symbolic to facing God. Adam was presented to the angels on behalf of all humans.

that angels, by their nature, are in service to humans. This underlines the elevated nature of humans. Essentially, angels aid humans, channeling blessings into their lives due to the unique merit and higher accomplishments humans possess, which even surpass those of angels.

The act of angels prostrating to mankind signifies their subservience in aiding human success. Indeed, they serve as agents paving the way for human prosperity. Such angels encompass those responsible for life, the harbingers of death, the bestowers of sustenance, the conveyors of revelation, those that accompany humans, the guardians, the recorders, and numerous others detailed in the Qur'an. Consequently, angels act as a guiding medium, assisting humans in their pursuit of perfection and accomplishment.

Upon reflecting on these verses, it becomes evident that Iblīs's refusal to prostrate to Adam stemmed from his aversion to humble himself to humanity and to aid in their journey toward success and perfection. He chose not to embrace the role that angels had accepted. Thus, by declining to prostrate to Adam, he distanced himself from the company of the angels. This sentiment is echoed in the verse: "*He said, 'O Iblīs! What prevented you from being among those who prostrated?'*" (15:32). Furthermore, he expressed his intent to oppose humans for the entirety of their earthly existence.

The evidence of God's disdain towards him is manifested in the imposition of an unbounded curse upon him, spanning from his act of defiance to the Day of Judgment. This duration aligns with the tenure of humanity on earth, ensuring the curse remains effective throughout this time frame. This imposition predates Iblīs's declaration of his intent to lead humans astray, as stated: "*I will mislead them all, every one of them*" (15:39). It suggests that his refusal to prostrate was born out of deep-seated animosity towards the human race, starting with Adam and extending to his last descendant.

Seemingly, the accursed one discerned from God's pronouncement: "*The curse shall lie on you till the day of Retribution*" (15:35), a linkage between his fate and that of humanity until the Day of Resurrection. Their tribulations and moral degradation are tied to his initial act of disobedience in not prostrating. This realization perhaps led him to plead for a delay in his doom until the resurrection of mankind. He implored: "*My Lord! Respite me till the day they will be resurrected*" (15:36). Notably, he didn't

seek respite limited to Adam's lifespan but extended his plea to encompass Adam's progeny until their collective resurrection. This plea aligns with the continuation of the curse till the Day of Resurrection. Once granted, his concealed intentions emerged, as he proclaimed: "*I will mislead them all, every one of them*" (15:39).

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قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٣٨﴾

(15:37-38) He said, 'You are among those who are reprieved until the Day whose time is known.'

God's response to Iblīs is revealing. In it, we observe that a portion of Iblīs's plea is accepted, while another portion is declined. The part that is granted pertains to the respite in lifespan he sought. However, the declined segment pertains to the stipulation that the respite be extended "until the Day they are resurrected." Reviewing the context of these verses, it becomes apparent that the Day with a predetermined time (*the Day whose time is known*) differs from the "Day they are raised again." It wasn't allowed for Iblīs to receive reprieve until the Day they rise again; instead, it was a different day. Undoubtedly, this day precedes the day humans are resurrected.

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From this, the flaw in the argument of those who assert that these two days in the verses are identical becomes evident. An example supporting this is God's statement: He said, "*You are one of the reprieved*" (al-A'rāf:15), which doesn't impose any restrictions.

The claim that the two days in these verses are the same is refuted by what's previously discussed. The argument citing the unbounded nature of the verse from Sūrah al-Ā'rāf is invalidated because it's limited by what is said in this sūrah and in Sūrah Ṣād, especially the phrase: "*until the Day whose time is known*" (15:37, 38:81). This manner of stipulation is frequent in the Qur'an, where some sections attest to others, and some elucidate others.

The evident interpretation of the "Day whose time is known" is that it's a predetermined moment within God's knowledge. This resonates with His declaration: "*We only send it down in a known measure*" (15:21). In the same vein, His statement: "*For such there is a known provision,*" (al-Ṣāffāt:41) mirrors this sentiment. Therefore, this time is undeniably known to God. Whether Iblīs is aware or unaware of it remains unclear based on the verse's phrasing. Some argue that God purposely kept the specifics of this day ambiguous, not elucidating it. Hence, while it is discernible to God,

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it remains a mystery to Iblīs. They posit that had this day been explicitly revealed to Iblīs, it might tempt him into further misdeeds. However, this notion lacks concrete evidence. Just because we find the phrasing ambiguous doesn't imply Iblīs did too. And to suggest that revealing the day would spur Iblīs to commit further wrongs—given he's the origin of all evil—is speculative at best. Take heed of this!

Furthermore, Iblīs's declaration, "*I will mislead them all, every one of them,*" (15:39) stands as evidence that he will endure until the last human, susceptible to his deceit, exists in this world. Iblīs inferred from God's statement, "*until the Day whose time is known,*" (15:37) that it denotes the final day of humankind on earth, where he can continue his attempts to lead them astray.

Ibn ʿAbbās is attributed with the view, widely accepted by the majority, that "the day" alludes to the final day of divine accountability, coinciding with the initial trumpet's blow when all beings will perish. This perspective seems anchored in the belief that Iblīs will persist as long as divine accountability exists, along with the potential for defiance and disobedience, mirroring humanity's lifespan on earth. This era concludes with the inaugural trumpet's sound, marking the end for all life. This moment represents the "Day whose time is known," for which God has granted Iblīs a respite. Separating the first trumpet from the next—heralding resurrection—is a span of either four hundred or forty years, as per differing narrations. This difference underscores the contrast between Iblīs's appeal and God's decree.

This view would be plausible if not for the assertion that Iblīs will remain as long as there is divine accountability and the possibility of defiance and disobedience; the premise is put forth without clear evidence or explanation. This assumption is based on the belief that all disbelief and rebellion in humanity arise from Iblis's temptations and insinuations, as indicated by verses such as: "*Did I not instruct you, O children of Adam, not to worship Shaytān? Indeed, he is your evident foe*" (Yasin:60), and His words: "*Indeed, Allah gave you a true promise, while I made a promise and broke it*" (14:22) among other similar verses.

The implication of this is that the existence of Iblīs will endure as long as the divine obligation remains. And the divine obligation persists as long

as humanity exists, which is the primary assertion.[1]

However, although attributing the sin of humans to the insinuation of Iblīs is generally understood from the verses and the narrations, the only thing these verses and narrations prove is that as long as there is sin and misguidance on earth, Iblīs will be there as well, not that as long as obligation exists, Iblīs will exist. We have no reason to prove the concurrence of the existence of sin and the existence of obligation.

On the contrary, both reason and scripture affirm that the ultimate destiny of humanity—attaining bliss—will dominate. Human society will gravitate towards virtue and righteousness. The sole entity to be worshiped on earth will be God. Consequently, the prevalence of disbelief and immorality will diminish, life will be pure, heart-related ailments and inner whisperings will fade away. More on this can be found in the discussions about prophethood in the second volume, and in the account of Noah in the tenth volume.[2] God declares: "*Corruption has appeared in both land and sea because of what people's own hands have brought about so that they may taste something of what they have done so that hopefully they will turn back*" (al-Rūm:41). Furthermore, He states: "*We wrote down in the Psalms after the Reminder came: 'It is My servants who are righteous who will inherit the earth*'" (al-Anbiyā':105).

It becomes clear from this that those who rely on this argument do so to indicate that the designated Day, known in time, which God has set as the endpoint of Iblīs's reprieve, is the day when God, in His glory, will rectify human society. On that day, the roots of corruption will be severed, and only God will be worshiped. This is not referring to the day when all creations will perish with the sounding of the first trumpet.[3]

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا

1 This comment still relates to what is attributed to Ibn 'Abbās. (Ed.)

2 English volumes 3 and 20 respectively. (Ed.)

3 Editor's note: The author's lengthy discussion revolves around the persistence of Iblīs in relation to human obligations and sins. While some verses suggest Iblīs's influence as the root cause of human misdeeds, there's no clear evidence linking his persistence to the continuity of human obligations. Conversely, reason and scripture highlight humanity's eventual shift towards righteousness, lessening the influence of Iblīs.

عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

(15:39-40) He said, 'My Lord, because You misled me, I will beguile them with the things upon the earth and mislead them all, every one of them, except Your servants among them who have been made sincere.'

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The particle "*bā*" in the phrase: "because You misled me" (*bi-mā aghwaytanī*) signifies causality, while the particle "*mā*" within the same phrase transforms the verb's meaning to align with its infinitive form. Essentially, the verse conveys: "Because of Your act of misleading me, I will rationalize my actions of deceiving them and maintaining them in sin." This sentiment mirrors the declaration in the Qur'an: "*We only misled them as we too were misled*" (al-Qaṣaṣ:63). Some argue that the particle "*bā*" in the phrase serves as an oath. Meaning, Iblīs is essentially declaring: "By Your act of misleading me, I swear to deceive them." Such an interpretation is highly speculative. Neither the Qur'an nor the sunnah presents an instance where an oath is sworn upon an act like misleading or misguidance. This interpretation doesn't align with the gravitas typically associated with subjects of oaths.

Iblīs, May God curse him, attributed his misguidance to God, stating: "*because You misled me*." Intriguingly, God neither contested this claim nor offered a response. It's important to note that Iblīs isn't suggesting he was misled during his refusal to bow to Adam. This is evident as there's no direct link between his sins and humanity's transgressions against their Lord, even if his sin is the genesis of theirs and he facilitates their sinful inclinations.

Iblīs is implying what benefits him from the prior statement of God: "*And indeed, the curse shall lie on you until the Day of Judgement.*" This refers to the perpetuation of the absolute curse upon him, which is being distanced from Divine Mercy and being misguided from the path of happiness. This misguidance is a repercussion of the deception he manifested from within himself and brought about on his own accord. Thus, any misguidance attributed to God is metaphorical and in response, not something initiated by Him. Such misguidance is conceivable and not beyond

God's ability.[1] Hence, God does not refute it, as He says: "*He misguides many by it and guides many by it. But He only misguides the deviators*" (al-Baqarah:26). We have elucidated this in the commentary on this verse and at other points in this book.

Based on this understanding, the particle "*bā*" in this context signifies causality. This means that Iblīs misguides humanity as a consequence of his own misguidance. His state of being distanced from Divine Mercy and bereft of felicity is due to the Divine Curse imposed upon him. When he whispers into the hearts of humans, enticing them, or gains influence over someone, he does so from a position of estrangement from Divine Mercy and felicity. Thus, anyone who is swayed by him or comes under his influence is similarly distanced from Divine Mercy and felicity. In essence, he misleads by casting the effects of his own deception onto others, which is evident.

Upon reflection on the verse, the conclusion is that the intended meaning of "misguidance" is not the primary or initial misguidance. Instead, it refers to the figurative misguidance as a form of retribution, as indicated by the phrase "*the curse shall lie on you*" in the verse.

Qur'anic commentators largely agree that if the phrase "*because You misled me*" (15:40) is taken in its apparent meaning, implying misguidance, then the misguidance would have been initiated by God, centered around Iblīs's refusal to prostrate before Adam. This has led them to view the statement as problematic, with interpretations varying based on differing theological perspectives on whether evil can be attributed to God and emanate from Him.

Adherents of the determinist view posit: if the act of misleading is ascribed to God without His repudiation, it suggests that both good and evil emanate from Him. This translates to, "O Lord, since You caused me to err by not allowing the prostration—this originates from You," leading to the declaration, "I vow to lead them all astray."

Others argue that attributing evil, misdeeds, or anything distasteful to God is untenable. They present several interpretations:

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1 Editor's note: This is a statement of His omnipotence. Just because He doesn't initiate misguidance without reason doesn't mean He lacks the ability to do so. He can guide and misguide as He wills, but His actions are based on divine wisdom, justice, and a knowledge that humans cannot fully comprehend.

(1) The phrase "to mislead" in the verse translates to "causing despair." Thus, the statement implies: "My Lord! Since You made me lose hope in Your Mercy, I will lead them to despair by tempting them to disobey You."
(2) "To mislead" is understood as "diverting from the path to paradise." The statement's interpretation then becomes: "Because You diverted me from Your paradise's path due to my defiance, I will lead all astray."
(3) The assertion "because You misled me" (15:40) refers to God's command to prostrate before Adam. By not complying, Iblīs went astray. This "misguidance" denotes a broader interpretation of God leading Iblīs astray. Reflecting on prior discussions reveals that such deliberation on this statement might be redundant. These interpretations offer varied perspectives on the verse.

Similar to this is their exploration regarding the term "reprieve" in the verse: "*You are among those who are reprieved*" (15:37). The inquiry centers on whether Iblīs is divinely preordained to lead astray and commit abhorrent acts? The prevailing thought suggests he isn't.

The *Mujawwizūn*[1] believe that this verse underscores that the concepts of good and evil, which human intellect employs to rationalize our deeds, don't sway God's actions. He possesses the authority to reward or chastise anyone, unfettered by any discernible rationale. His choices may even run counter to logical reasoning. They argue that if someone posits that a sagacious individual could imprison a group in a dwelling, ignite it, and release numerous deadly serpents inside, yet not have the intent for those trapped to suffer burns and bites, such a person has deviated from inherent human sensibility. Hence, the natural deduction is that God permitted Iblīs's reprieve to lead certain individuals astray.

The *Māni'ūn* argue that when God granted "respite" to Iblīs, it was due to His foreknowledge that Iblīs and his progeny would ultimately die in disbelief and wickedness, leading them to Hell regardless of the respite. Furthermore, by acceding to Iblīs' plea, God magnified the rewards for

1 Editor's note: The terms "*Mujawwizūn*" or "*Māni'ūn*" aren't commonly associated with any specific well-known theological school or sect. However, as per the context, it could be referring to a group or individuals who permit or allow a particular theological stance or opinion.

righteous believers. Iblīs' declaration, "*I will mislead them all*" (15:39), underscores this point. If it were God's design to lead them astray, Iblīs wouldn't have claimed this role for himself. There are various other justifications presented by the *Māni'ūn* to this effect.

What has caused them to overlook the numerous verses about testing and tribulation? For instance, the verse: "*so that Allah may sift the bad out from the good*" (al-'Anfāl:37), and also the verse: "*so that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts*" (Āl 'Imrān:154). These verses, among many others, underscore that systems of felicity and misery, as well as reward and punishment, rest upon the principle of trial and tribulation. Humanity stands at a crossroad between virtue and vice, and between joy and suffering; their outcomes are determined by their choices and actions.

If no caller beckoned humanity towards virtue—be it the esteemed angels or, for the sake of argument, God Himself—and no caller lured them towards wickedness, such as Iblīs and his kin, then the entire premise of a "trial" would lose its significance. As stated in the Qur'an: "*Shaytān promises you poverty and commands you to avarice. Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and abundance*" (al-Baqarah:268).

While God did provide Iblīs respite in his contention with humankind until the predetermined Day, He also fortified humanity with the guidance of angels, lasting as long as the world endures. God didn't merely state to Iblīs, "You are granted respite:" He declared, "*You are among those who are reprieved*" (15:37). This insinuates that others too were granted such respite, with Iblīs being merely one of them.

Similarly, while God granted Iblīs the capacity to entice mankind towards various deceptions, such as disbelief and defiance, He also fortified humanity with the guidance towards the truth. He instilled in the human heart a love for belief and naturally inclined them towards *Tawhīd* (monotheism). Humanity was endowed with the ability to distinguish between vice and virtue, and for those who believe in their Lord, He provided a guiding light to navigate amongst their peers, among other divine supports. The Qur'an proclaims: "*Allah guides to the truth*" (Yūnus:35). It further mentions: "*Allah has given you love of faith and made it pleasing to your hearts*" (al-Ḥujurāt:7). Another verse articulates: "*Set your face firmly towards the dīn, as a pure natural believer, Allah's natural pattern*

*on which He made mankind*" (al-Rūm:30). Yet another reveals: "*By the soul and Him who fashioned it, He inspired it with* (*the ability to discern between*) *immorality and piety*" (al-Shams:7). The verse: "*Is someone who was dead and whom We brought to life, supplying him with a light by which to walk among people*" (al-Anʿām:122) emphasizes this point. And reinforcing the divine commitment, the scripture states: "*We will certainly help our Messengers and those who believe both in the life of this world and on the Day the witnesses appear*" (Ghāfir:51). The utilization of the first person plural conveys the involvement of the angels.

Human beings, at the inception of their creation, are neutral entities, neither destined for joy nor sorrow. They stand at a crossroads with two diverging paths before them:

(1) The path of virtue and obedience, tread by the angels who are inherently predisposed to obey.

(2) The path of wickedness and rebellion, the way of Iblīs and his legions, characterized solely by resistance and defiance.

As individuals navigate through life, the path they gravitate towards will define their journey. Companions from the chosen path will enhance its allure, guiding them to its ultimate destination, be it Heaven or Hell, bliss or despair.

From the discussions thus far, it's evident that the postponement of Iblīs's reckoning until a predetermined Day isn't an arbitrary decision, nor does it contravene the principles of causality. This delay is purposeful, enabling Iblīs and, conversely, the angels opposing him, to set in motion the essential tests and challenges for humanity. This context isn't suitable for further objections.

The segment of the verse that reads: "*I will beguile them with the things upon the earth*" (15:39) can mean "I will make falsehood appear attractive to them" or "I will glamorize disobedience for them." The first meaning is broader in scope, even though the direct object is not explicitly mentioned in either case. Clearly, the focus isn't on the object. The verb in this context is used in its intransitive form, highlighting the origin of this beguilement, which subtly hints at deception. It's commonly understood that when one says: "*zayyana lahu kadhā wa kadhā*," it translates to "he was deceived by such and such." The verse's surrounding context suggests that the pronoun "them" refers to Adam and his descendants. The act of beguiling them

with earthly matters is synonymous with deceiving them through the allure of this temporal world, a primary trigger for going astray. Therefore, the adjoining statement: "I will mislead them all, every one of them" (15:39) serves to link the resultant consequence to its underlying cause.

The verse underscores, or rather reaffirms, what we previously elaborated on in the commentary concerning Adam's Garden in the first volume of this book. It emphasizes that Adam's act of eating from the forbidden tree was influenced by the cunning whispers of Iblīs. However, this act wasn't a violation of a mandate but rather a deviation from divine advice. Consequently, it doesn't tarnish Adam's infallibility. This verse further illustrates Iblīs's awareness that his only opportunity to deceive and lead them astray was on earth. He had no power to deceive Adam and his spouse in the Garden. His utmost capability was to instigate their exile from the Garden and facilitate their habitation on earth. This removal (from the Garden) allowed for their procreation, providing Iblīs with an opportunity to mislead both them and their descendants away from the truth and the righteous path. God says: "*O Children of Adam! Do not let Shaytān tempt you into trouble as he expelled your parents from the Garden, stripping them of their covering and disclosing to them their private parts*" (al-A'rāf:27).

Regarding Iblīs's declaration, "*except Your servants among them who have been made sincere*" (15:40), this is an exception to Iblīs's otherwise unrestricted misleading. It implies that there exists a distinct group within humanity, known as the *mukhlasūn* (with a *fathah* over the letter *lām*, as per the prevalent recitation). The context of this statement reinforces that this particular group consists of those who have wholeheartedly devoted themselves to God, and it was God Himself who instilled this sincerity in them. We've already touched upon the concept of sincerity in our commentary on Sūrah Yusuf. Essentially, the *mukhlasūn* are individuals whom God has selected for His exclusive devotion, subsequent to their own sincere commitment to Him. Consequently, they harbor no allegiance to anyone but God, both in their actions and in their hearts. Being so engrossed in God, they remain impervious to Shaytān's temptations. Any attempts by Shaytān to ensnare them only serve to reinforce their connection with God, drawing them closer to His remembrance.[1]

1 Editor's note: In other words, the *mukhlasūn* represent a unique spiritual

From this perspective, it becomes evident that the exception pertains solely to succumbing to Iblīs's misguidance, not his attempts at beautification. While Iblīs, may God curse him, endeavors to beautify (evil) for all, only those outside the circle of the *mukhlasūn* can be misled by him.

From prioritizing the mention of "servants" and then clarifying them as the *mukhlasūn*, it can be inferred that the true essence of servitude is when God exclusively dedicates a servant for Himself. This means that no one possesses the servant except God. It further highlights that a person should not perceive any ownership for themselves, not of their being, their attributes, their effects, or their deeds. The dominion and sovereignty, with emphasis on the pronunciation of "dominion" (*mulk*), belong solely to God.

قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

(15:41) He said, 'This is a Straight Path to Me.'

Based on the context, it is evident that this is an indirect assertion that all affairs are under His dominion, and none exist independently of Him. Just as the course of a ship on the open sea informs its passengers of the inescapability of preparation and the necessary precautions for a maritime journey, similarly, the route of a caravan traversing mountainous terrains necessitates readiness to navigate its towering heights and challenging routes. Hence, this straight path is inherently bound to God's edicts and mandates, for it is a direct path towards Him, and He is the alpha and omega of all. Every matter is under His lordship and dominion.

The context also elucidates God's declaration: "*This is a Straight Path to Me*" (15:41). This reflects Iblīs' proclamation: "*I will mislead them all, every one of them, except Your servants among them who have been made sincere*" (15:39-40). Iblīs, by making such a claim, implied his exemption from God's decree, positing himself above God's will concerning human creation, their role as His representatives, and their servitude to Him. This sentiment is echoed elsewhere where God states: "*You will not find most*

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echelon, marked by their sincere devotion and God's favor. While they commit wholeheartedly to God, His grace further cements their status. Immune to Shaytān's deceptions, any diversionary tactics only amplify their divine connection, turning potential pitfalls into pathways to even deeper devotion.

*of them thankful*" (Al-Isrā':17).

Therefore, the essence of this verse is: "You contend that you will mislead the majority, thinking this power and will is yours, wrongly assuming your autonomy from God in executing this. Yet, only I preside over this affair and solely I adjudicate it. It only transpires by My decree. If you mislead them, it is with My consent. Should you be barred from doing so, it is by My will. You hold no sway in this, and possess nothing unless I permit it. Your strength is but a grant from Me. Concerning your dominion, I have ordained: "*You have no authority over any of My servants except for the misled who follow you*" (15:42).

إِنَّ عِبَادِى لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(15:42) You have no authority over any of My servants except for the misled who follow you,

The verdict being referred to pertains to the matter of misguidance as discussed in the preceding verse. God emphasizes that this affair is exclusively His domain, and none can partake or exert influence over it.

In essence, Adam and all his descendants are God's servants. It is not merely the sincere ones among them, contrary to Iblīs's assertion: "*except Your servants among them who have been made sincere*" (15:40). God did not grant him any dominion over His servants to autonomously govern their destinies or lead them astray. He only endowed him with influence over a subset: those who went astray, chose to follow him, and entrusted him with their guidance. It is over this group alone that he holds sway.

Upon a detailed scrutiny of the verse, it appears to counteract Iblīs's declaration: "*I will mislead them all, every one of them, except Your servants among them who have been made sincere*" (15:39-40) in three fundamental ways:

**First:** Iblīs erroneously categorized God's servants as exclusively those who are sincere, believing he had no dominion over them. He assumed his influence extended over all others. Contrarily, God clarifies that "His servants" encompass all, and Iblīs only has sway over a certain faction from among them, those who willingly heed his guidance. The idea of Iblīs exerting influence over anyone beyond this group is refuted by God.

**Second:** Iblīs, may he be accursed, professed autonomy in his mission to mislead humanity. This is evident in his assertion: "*I will mislead them*

*all*" (15:39), posited in defiance and as an act of retribution against God. God rebuts this by deeming it a misguided assumption. Such influence can only manifest under God's ordained decree. Iblīs's power to lead astray is only facilitated by God and extends merely to those who, due to their own flawed decisions, choose to follow him; they are the ones truly misled.

Iblīs has never acted autonomously, nor has he thwarted any of his Lord's plans. His act of misleading is in accordance with God's decree; those led astray by him remain in that state because of him. Iblīs indirectly acknowledged this, saying: "*My Lord, because You misled me*" (15:39). Furthermore, his exception of the sincere was also under the overarching decree of God. All judgments rest solely with God.

The essence of this noble verse is the delineation of Iblīs's authority: he can only influence those who are predisposed to being misled while those who are made sincere by God—after their personal commitment to sincerity—are beyond Iblīs's reach, all in accordance with God's decree. This interpretation aligns with a pivotal tenet of *Tawhīd* (monotheism) as elucidated in the Qur'an. For instance, the verse: "*Judgement comes from no one but Allah*" (Yūsuf:67) or "*He is Allah. There is no god but Him. Praise be to Him in this world and the Next World. Judgment belongs to Him*" (al-Qaṣaṣ:70), as well as "*It is the truth from your Lord*" (Āl ʿImrān:60) and "*Allah confirms the Truth by His words*" (Yūnus:82). Numerous verses reinforce the idea that all affirmations and negations stem from God, prevailing by His command.

From this, it's clear that some Qur'anic commentators have taken a lenient approach in their interpretation of the verse: "*except for the misled who follow you*" (15:42). They assert that when individuals heed Iblīs's call and become his followers, he attains authority over them, leading them astray from the path of righteousness to the allure he presents. Evidently, this authority Iblīs acquires is a consequence of their misguided decisions, not an inherent power or a privilege granted by God.

The flaw in this perspective is that it diminishes Iblīs's autonomy and inherent influence, attributing it instead to the inherent nature of things. If Iblīs lacks intrinsic power and cannot act without his Lord's sanction, then all entities share this characteristic. They neither have inherent judgment nor intrinsic attributes; even their very existence hinges solely on God's will. Grasp this notion!

**Third:** Iblīs's authority to mislead people he can is indeed facilitated by God's decree. However, he doesn't possess the inherent ability to mislead without an initial or prior cause. It's implausible to attribute such misleading directly to the divine realm. Instead, Iblīs's authority is more like a retribution based on the prior inclination of individuals to be led astray.

Evidence for this can be found in the verse: "*Except for the misled who follow you*," (15:42) meaning Iblīs only misguides those who initially lean towards his deception. Essentially, individuals first incline towards his deception, then Iblīs exacerbates their deviation. Thus, there's a difference between the initial inclination (*ghawāyah*) and the subsequent misleading (*ighwā*'). The former is a result of human wrongdoing (or choices), while the latter is due to Iblīs and is a divine retribution.[1]

If this act of misleading by Iblīs was initial and towards those undeserving, then he alone would be blamed, not the human. This is reminiscent of what he will proclaim on the Day of Judgement, as narrated: "*I had not authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me. Do not, therefore, blame me but blame yourselves*" (14:22). Thus, the blame lies with the sinful human, who is accountable for his disobedience, not Iblīs.

Indeed, Iblīs is blameworthy for his actions stemming from his poor choices, specifically the act of misleading. God granted him this authority as retribution for his refusal to prostrate to Adam when commanded. This ability to mislead solidified his authority over it, as alluded to elsewhere in His words: "*Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe"* (al-A'rāf:27). Furthermore, a verse that clearly supports our entire premise is: "*It has been decreed upon him that whoever turns to him, he will mislead them and will guide them to the punishment of the Blaze"* (al-Hajj:4).

From the preceding discussion, it becomes apparent that the term "My servants" refers to all of humanity. The exception in the phrase "those who follow you" is continuous and not detached. The word "from" (*min*) in the phrase "from the misled" is explanatory. The discourse is structured to refute Iblīs' claim. The verse encapsulates two divine decrees in the context

1 Editor's note: To simplify this discussion, Iblīs's ability to mislead is bound by divine decree, emphasizing his limited agency. The verse (15:42) underscores this, indicating he only intensifies the errant tendencies of those predisposed to his influence.

of what is excepted and what it's excepted from, among other things.

From the above, it's evident that the view of some, which holds that "My servants" refers specifically to those whom Iblīs exempted and described as "Your servants among them," is not entirely straightforward. This interpretation suggests a disjointed exception, implying that Iblīs has authority over those he can mislead, but the truly sincere are beyond his reach. The implication is that the sincere are out of your dominion, but you have been granted authority over those misled followers of yours.

Upon deeper reflection of the previously discussed matters, this perspective undermines the fundamental narrative flow, negating the confrontational tone and the discourse's positioning in the realm of divine grandeur and pride. It demotes the divine address, turning it into a mere paraphrasing of Iblīs's words while preserving its essence, whether as an affirmation or acknowledgment. It's as if Iblīs says, "I will lead them all astray except the sincere," and God responds, "You cannot mislead the sincere, but you can mislead the rest!"

Some have also interpreted "My servants" to mean all of humanity, while still considering the exception as disjointed.[1] This might be based on the assumption that a majority can't be exempted from a general rule. For example, one wouldn't say, "He has authority over a hundred except for ninety-nine." It's well-known that among humans, the misled outnumber the sincere by a significant margin.

The perspective presented here suggests that when considering the exception in the context of specific numbers, the exception seems inconsistent. However, when viewed in terms of categories or types, it makes more sense. Humans can be categorized into various groups: the sincere believers, those who do not have the cognitive faculties to be held liable by God (or the weak in faith), and those who have followed Iblīs and are thus astray. The verse makes an exception for the last group by their category, leaving the other categories unmentioned.

Some believe that the exception is disjointed, careful not to confirm Iblīs's authority even over the misled. They argue that such authority would

1 Editor's note: "Disjointed exception" refers to an exception that seems out of place or counterintuitive in the context of a given statement. In this instance, saying "My servants" encompasses all of humanity but then implying the majority are exempted contradicts common linguistic and logical conventions.

contradict the absolute sovereignty or justice of the Divine. According to this view, the verse means that Iblīs has no inherent authority over "My servants." Those misled individuals who follow him have voluntarily relinquished their reins to him, allowing him to exert influence over them. Such a situation isn't because Iblīs inherently possesses this authority, such that it would challenge God's creation, nor is it directly from God, which would question His divine justice.

Within the verse, it is conveyed that Iblīs holds authority over the astray, not inherently but as granted by God. This doesn't contradict God's justice in creation, as this is a consequential authority and not an inherent one. There's no contradiction between God decreeing this authority and individuals choosing to follow Iblīs on their own free will. All of this has been clarified in what we have previously discussed.

Furthermore, verses such as "*It is decreed upon him that whoever turns to him, he will mislead them*" (al-Hajj:4), and "*Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe*" (al-A'rāf:27) clearly indicate the affirmation of Iblīs's authority and that it's by divine ordainment.

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وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(15:43) and indeed Hell is the tryst of them all.

Clearly, the term *maw'id* denotes a place, specifically the promised rendezvous. When Hell is referred to as "*the tryst of them all*," it signifies it as the location (or meeting place) where God's assurance of punishment to them will materialize.

This assertion accentuates His omnipotence and the reality that all matters revert to Him. It is akin to God addressing Iblīs, stating: "The authority you possess over the astray isn't inherent to you and doesn't diminish Our capability. It is We who granted you this authority over them due to their allegiance to you. Furthermore, they shall face the anguish of Hell as retribution."

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The aforementioned pronouncement specifically speaks of their penalty, omitting Iblīs and his destined punishment. The focus here is to elucidate their fate (or condition). This stands in contrast to the verses: "*I will surely fill hell with you and all of those who follow you,*" (Ṣād:85) and "*indeed the Hell shall be your requital, an ample reward*" (al-Isrā':63).

The framing of these verses diverges from the verse under discussion.

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَقْسُومٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

(15:44) It has seven gates and to each gate belongs a separate portion of them.

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He, in His divine wisdom, has not clearly specified in His explicit words what these gates are meant to signify. Are they like the doors in walls that lead everyone to a single courtyard? Or are they levels and degrees differing in the type and intensity of punishment? Often, diverse categories are referred to as "doors," just as one would say "categories of sustenance" (*abwāb al-rizq*), "categories of evil" (*abwāb al-sharr*), and "categories of mercy" (*abwāb al-rahman*). God states, "*We opened for them the gates of all* (*good*) *things*" (al-An'ām:44). Sometimes the means to something or the ways to reach it are termed as 'doors', like the "pathways to sustenance" due to various types of earnings and dealings.

It's plausible to derive the second meaning from various verses about Hell, such as His words: "*The faithless will be driven to Hell in throngs. When they reach it, and its gates are opened…*" (al-Zumar:71), and "*Indeed the hypocrites will be in the lowest reach of the Fire*" (al-Nisā':145), among other verses.

Supporting this is His saying, "*and to each gate belongs a separate portion.*" The apparent meaning suggests that the specified class (*juz'*) is allocated to a gate (*bāb*), which is more consistent with the interpretation of a gate as a category (*ṭabaqah*) rather than an entrance (*madkhal*). Some interpret the assigned portion (or allotted share, *juz' muqasūm*) as a distinct group or sect (*firīq mu'ayyin*) separated from others, which seems evident.

Based on this, the fact that Hell has seven gates indicates that the punishment prepared within it varies into seven categories. Each category then divides according to the division of the group that enters and resides within. This implies that the sins leading to entry into Hell are divided into seven categories, as well as the paths leading to and reasons prompting those sins. This supports the traditions conveyed about these meanings, as will be elaborated upon, God willing.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(15:45-46) Indeed the Godwary will be amid Gardens and Springs: 'Enter it in peace and safety!'

Meaning, they are settled in gardens and springs. It will be said to them: "Enter it in peace," a description that cannot be detailed nor is its attribute withheld, signifying that you are safe from all harm and evil.

When God mentioned His decree concerning those who followed Iblīs from among the misled, He also stated His decision for the righteous, which is Paradise. The description of Godwary (or piety, *taqwā*) is found in the Messenger's words as avoiding what is forbidden by God. Repeatedly, the Qur'an has conveyed the glad tidings of Paradise to the pious (*muttaqūn*), implying that the pious encompass more than just the devoted.

Some argue that the context of these verses unmistakably suggests that the pious are the same individuals previously described as those who have achieved sincerity. They also maintain that generic terms are wholly applicable to all their individual members.

This perspective stems from the interpretation that the "servants" mentioned in the verse: "*Indeed as for My servants, You do not have any authority over them*" (15:42), refer exclusively to those rendered sincere, so much so that they confine the scope of this statement solely to this group. However, we have highlighted that "servants" encompasses all of humanity, with only the misguided being the exception. God has clearly stated that the misguided will be destined for the Fire. In contrast, this verse underscores that Paradise is the ordained abode for everyone other than the misguided. The fate of those incapable of accountability and those committing grave sins remains unaddressed. Regarding those who perpetrate severe sins and pass away unrepentant, their ultimate fate hinges on potential intercession.[1] Hence, the ones left are the pious among the believers, a category broader than those deemed sincere. Their decreed fate is entry into Paradise.

Concerning the notion that an absolute term should be applied to a 'complete individual,' this is a mistaken view. Instead, the term should refer to an 'individual' as commonly understood. A more detailed discussion on

1 Editor's Note: In the author's commentary on verse 4:48, it is stated that intercession will have no effect on the sin of polytheism if it remains unrepented. See Eng. vol. 8 under the verse 4:48.

this matter is available in the field of Islamic legal principles.

In his exegesis, Imām al-Rāzī notes that the term *al-Muttaqīn* (the Godwary or pious) in the verse refers to those who abstain from polytheism (*shirk*). He attributes this interpretation to a consensus among the majority of the Companions and the Successors, citing their views as evidence.

He elaborates further:

> "This is indeed the correct and valid understanding. What supports this claim is that the term *al-Muttaqī* refers to someone who has exercised *taqwā* even just once, similar to how *al-Ḍārib* (one who strikes) refers to someone who has struck even just once. Thus, it is not necessary for the description to be accurate that one must embody all facets of *taqwā*. Supporting this view is the fact that one who fulfills even a single aspect of *taqwā* is considered to have *taqwā*, as fulfilling any individual aspect inherently encapsulates the essence of *taqwā*. Therefore, anyone who demonstrates *taqwā* should rightfully be termed *Muttaqī*. This is why some have said: 'The apparent meaning of an imperative does not require repetition.'
>
> The apparent reading of the verse suggests that anyone who refrains from even a single sin is entitled to gardens and springs in the hereafter. However, there is a unanimous consensus within the community that this entitlement is conditional upon abstaining from disbelief.
>
> Furthermore, this verse appears after Iblīs's statement: "*Except Your exclusive servants among them*," which follows God's proclamation: "*Indeed as for My servants, You do not have any authority over them*." Consequently, faith is a critical factor in this ruling. Therefore, it's essential that no additional conditions should be imposed, as limiting the general rule should be minimized to align more closely with the original and apparent meaning of the text. Therefore, it is confirmed that the ruling in question applies universally to all who declare: "There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God," even if they belong to the ranks of the sinful. This is an unequivocal affirmation, and the message is plain to see."

The essence of his argument suggests that the verse includes anyone

who abstains from *shirk*, even if they engage in all the major sins that lead to Hellfire according to the Noble Qur'an, or neglect all obligatory duties that, when neglected, also warrant the same punishment. However, anyone deeply engrossed in reflecting upon the Divine verses will find it incontrovertible that such an individual is not termed *Muṭṭaqī* by the Qur'an nor counted among the *Muṭṭaqīn*. Indeed, the Qur'an frequently refers to the *Muṭṭaqīn*, explicitly promising them Paradise in nearly twenty instances, and often describes them as those who steer clear of prohibitions. Thus, *taqwā* is defined in the narrations in this same vein, as we have mentioned.

Indeed, simply meeting the conditions to be described by a particular term is different from actually being labeled with that term. One is not called a "believer," "doer of good," "obedient," "sincere," or "patient," especially when these descriptors imply an ongoing state, unless these characteristics are firmly rooted in them. If al-Rāzī's claim about the *Muṭṭaqīn* holds true, then the same reasoning would also apply to categories such as the wrongdoers, immoral, corrupt, criminals, misguided, and the lost—all of whom God has warned with Hellfire. This would result in a puzzling inconsistency and imbalance in the divine text. If one argues that some verses could shift the meaning of these labels to cover isolated or occasional acts—just like the verses concerning repentance and intercession—then other verses could similarly shift the scope of this specific verse to cover a *Muṭṭaqī* who commits a sinful act once or twice. Examples include the verses warning against major sins such as fornication, unjust killing, usury, and misappropriating the wealth of orphans, and other similar verses.

Subsequently, al-Rāzī provides various unfounded justifications to elucidate his explanation, referencing the sequence of statements by Iblīs and God. Given our previous discussions, it's evident that this argument holds no weight. He further contends that introducing an additional condition to this verse beyond faith contradicts its primary meaning. However, the primary meaning is referenced only in the absence of linguistic cues. As you're well aware, numerous Qur'anic verses offer clear constraints on this matter.

Regarding his statement that this contradicts the apparent meaning (of the verse), it appears he's alluding to the clear meaning of a statement when taken at face value. Yet, he seems to have missed the fact that the straightforward understanding of an unqualified statement stands as

evidence only when there's no valid explanation that can specify its scope.[1]

In reality, the verse only encompasses those in whom the quality of *Taqwā* has taken root—that is, abstaining from acts that God has forbidden. These individuals are the ones assured of eternal happiness and Paradise. Furthermore, what is gleaned from both the Qur'ān and the Sunnah is that people professing *Tawḥīd*—those who affirm that there is no god but God—will not remain in Hell forever and are guaranteed entry into Paradise. This is distinct from what the verse concerning the term *Muṭṭaqīn* suggests.

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(15:47-48) We will remove whatever rancor there is in their breasts–brothers, (reclining) on couches facing one another. Therein neither weariness shall touch them, nor will they (ever) be expelled from it.

The term "resentment" (*al-ghill*) refers to grudges or ill-will. Some say it encompasses both grudges and envy that may drive a person to harm others. The term "couches" (*al-surur*) is the plural of "couch" (*sarīr*), and "hardship" (*al-naṣb*) refers to the physical and emotional difficulties that come from external factors.

The verses describe specific blessings among the multitude of blessings in Paradise to underline certain points. They emphasize that the residents of Paradise are in a state of peace and security, free from the trials that those who have gone astray have to face—such as the loss of happiness, sovereignty, and dignity. God tells us that they are safe even from themselves since He has removed any resentment (or rancor) from their hearts. They sit as "*brothers,* (*reclining*) *on couches facing one another*," and the significance of their sitting arrangement (*facing one another*) will be covered in later narrational discussions, God willing.

1 Editor's note: In summary, Imām al-Rāzī's main contention is about the inclusiveness and depth of the term "*al-Muttaqīn*," arguing that its essence can be achieved by abstaining from shirk, even if they engage in all the major sins that lead to Hellfire and that this understanding has significant historical and textual backing. The author counters this claim.

Moreover, they are secure from external causes and factors, so no hardship touches them in the first place. They are in a state of peace and security from the side of their Lord, and they will never be expelled from Paradise. Thus, they are blessed and honored from every angle. Neither misery nor weakness will affect them—not from themselves, not from the rest of creation, and not from their Lord.

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## An Excursus

The decrees that were issued from the Source of Dignity at the outset of human creation, according to His statements—Exalted is He—are ten:

(1) The first and second are in His words to Iblīs: "*Get out from here, you are indeed accursed. The curse will be on you till the Day of Reckoning*" (15:35). These two can be considered as one.

(2) The third is in His words: "*You are among those who are reprieved until the Day whose time is known*" (15:38).

(3) The fourth, fifth, and sixth are His words: "*You have no authority over any of My servants except for the misled who follow you* " (15:43).

(4) The seventh and eighth are His words to Adam and those with him: "*Go down from here as enemies to each other! You will have residence on the earth and enjoyment for a time*" (al-Baqarah:36).

(5) The ninth and tenth are His words to them: "*Go down from it, every one of you! Then when guidance comes to you from Me, those who follow My guidance will feel no fear and will know no sorrow. But those who disbelieve and deny Our Signs are the Companions of the Fire remaining in it timelessly, for ever*" (al-Baqarah:38-39).

There are also subsidiary decrees that follow these foundational ones, which can be discovered by the thoughtful researcher.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In the exegesis of *Tafsīr al-Ayyāshī*, it is reported from Muḥammad b. Muslim, who narrates from Imām al-Bāqir, "I asked him about the verse from the Qur'an: '*And I breathed into him of My spirit*.' He said: This is a spirit that God created, and He breathed it into Ādam."

(2) Additionally, Abū Baṣīr narrates from Imām al-Sādiq regarding the verse, '*So when I have proportioned him and breathed into*

*him of My spirit*,' the Imām said: "He created a form and created a spirit, then commanded the angel to breathe it into the form. This spirit is not something that diminishes anything from God; it is from His power, exalted is He."

**Author's comment:** Both narrations emphasize that the spirit breathed into Ādam is a creation of God and is not something that takes away from His essence or attributes. It is an act of His divine power.

(3) In another narration in *Tafsīr al-Ayyāshī*, as well as in the account from Samāʿah, it is related from the Imām al-Sādiq: "Ādam was created and the spirit was breathed into him. When I asked him about the spirit, he said: 'It is His (God's) power from the celestial realm.'"

**Author's comment:** This means that it is His active power, emanating from His essential power, as evidenced by the preceding report.

(4) In *Maʾānī al-Akhbār*, it is narrated through its chain of transmission from Muḥammad b. Muslim, who said, "I asked Imām al-Bāqir about the verse of God, the Mighty and Majestic, '*And I breathed into him of My spirit*.' He said: 'It is a spirit that God chose, favored, created, and attributed to Himself, and preferred it over all other spirits. Then He commanded that it be breathed into Ādam.'"

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, through its chain of transmission, Muḥammad b. Muslim said: "I asked Imām al-Bāqir about what is narrated that God created Ādam in His own image. He replied: 'It is in the image of a created, originated form that God chose and preferred over all other differing forms. He attributed it to Himself, just as He attributed the Kaʿbah to Himself, saying, "My House" and "*And I breathed into him of My spirit*."'

**Author's comment:** These narrations are among the most enlightening on the nature of the spirit (*rūh*) and include profound insights. We will clarify their meanings when discussing the reality of the spirit, God willing.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is reported from Ibn Bābūyah through his chain of narrators from Imām al-Ṣādiq regarding the verse, "*Indeed, you are of those reprieved until a known Day*." He said, "On the day when the trumpet will be blown once, Iblīs will die between the first and second blowing."

(7) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Wahb b. Jumayʿ, and in *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, from Sharaf al-Dīn al-Najafī, omitting the chain of transmission from Wahb, the wording attributed to the latter from Imām al-Ṣādiq who said: "I asked him about Iblīs and the verse, '*My Lord, then reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected*,' and God's reply '*Indeed, you are of those reprieved until a known Day*.' Which day is it? He replied, 'O Wahb, do you think it is the day on which God will resurrect people? Rather, God has reprieved him until the day when our Qā'im will rise. He will then seize him by his forelock and strike off his head. That day is the known time.'"

(8) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated through its chain from Muḥammad b. Yūnus from a man who heard from Imām al-Ṣādiq concerning the verse, "*Indeed, you are of those reprieved until a known Day*," he said: "The known Day is when the Messenger of God will slaughter him on the rock that is in Jerusalem."

**Author's comment:** These reports pertain to the concept of *Rajʿah* (the return) and carry similar meanings to the preceding narrations. There are other reports about this from the path of the Ahl al-Bayt.

It is possible that the first narration among the last three could have been issued in the context of *Taqqiyah* (dissimulation). The three narrations can be reconciled without contradiction, in light of what was previously discussed on the topic of *Raj'ah* in the first part of the book. It is worth noting that the narrations from the path of the Ahl al-Bayt often interpret most of the verses related to the Resurrection as referring at times to the appearance of al-Mahdī, at times to the *Raj'ah*, and at other times to the Resurrection. These three days share the unveiling of truths but differ in intensity. The rule that applies to one of them extends to the others. Understand this.

(9) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Jābir from Imām al-Bāqir, who said: "I asked, 'What is your explanation` of God's statement, "*Indeed, as for My servants you do not have any authority over them*"? He replied, 'God means you have no power to make them enter either Paradise or Hell.'"

(10) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī* regarding the verse, "*It has seven gates*," one of the infallibles replied:"Each gate is for the followers of a certain

school of thought, and Paradise has eight gates."

**Author's Comment:** The various accounts elaborate on the structure and purpose of the gates of Hell. These are not to be understood as mere physical gates but should be comprehended at a metaphysical level. The discourse is not limited and should not be understood as exhaustive.

(11) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is cited from Aḥmad's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, narrating from Khattāb b. ʿAbdullāh, who said that Imām ʿAlī described: "Do you know how the gates of Hell are? We said, 'Like these doors?' He said, 'No, but they are like this,' and he placed one hand over the other and spread one hand upon the other."

(12) Also, it cites Ibn al-Mubārak, Hunād, Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Aḥmad in his book on Asceticism, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in the Description of Hell, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Bayhaqī in the Resurrection, narrating from Imām ʿAlī: "The gates of Hell are seven, some above others. The first will be filled, then the second, then the third, until all are filled."

(13) Further, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Khaṭīb in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* narrate from Anas, who said that the Messenger of God said concerning the verse, "*and to each gate belongs a separate portion of them*," that "One portion (of people) associated partners with God, another doubted God, and another was heedless of God."

**Author's Comment:** This narration enumerates the components of the gates rather than the gates themselves. From the context, it's clear that they are not limited only to these three.

(14) Finally, in the same source, it cites Ibn Mardawayh narrating from Abū Dharr, who said the Messenger of God stated: "There is a gate in Hell through which none shall enter except those who betrayed me concerning my family and shed their blood after me."

**Author's comment:** The word "betrayed" (*khafarahu*) implies deceit and the breaking of covenants.

The traditions below delve into various aspects of the afterlife, particularly Paradise and Hell, as well as the deep spiritual connection among the Ahl al-Bayt and their followers. It is worth noting that the insights provided in these accounts are consistent with what we have previously discussed.

(15) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is cited from Ahmad, Ibn Hibban, al-Tabari, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqi in "The Resurrection,"

narrating from ʿUtba b. ʿAbdullāh who reported from the Prophet as saying: "Paradise has eight gates and Hell has seven, and some are greater than others."

**Author's comment:** The traditions, as you can see, substantiate what we have put forth earlier.

(16) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding the verse, "*And We will remove whatever rancor there is in their breasts*," one of the infallibles stated that this refers to enmity.

(17) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, narrated from al-Hafiz Abu Naʿim through his chain of narrators from Abū Huraira, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is reported to have asked the Messenger of God: "Who is more dear to you, me or Fāṭimah?" The Prophet replied: "Fāṭimah is dearer to me than you, but you are more honored to me than her. I foresee you at my pool (*Ḥawḍ*), defending it against people. You will have pitchers as numerous as the stars, and you, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Ḥamzah, and Jaʿfar will be brothers in Paradise, reclining on elevated couches, and you will be with me along with your followers." Then the Messenger of God recited the verse, "(They are) brothers, (reclining) on couches facing one another." No one will look into the faults of another.

(18) From Ibn al-Maghāzilī in *Manāqib Ahl al-bayt,* raising it to Zayd b. Arqam, it is reported: "I entered upon the Messenger of God, who said, 'I create brotherhood among you as God created brotherhood among the angels.' Then he said to ʿAlī, 'You are my brother,' and recited the verse, '(They are) brothers, (reclining) on couches facing one another.' The friends for the sake of God will look at each other."

**Author's Comment:** This account is also narrated from Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, attributed to Zayd b. Awfā from the Prophet, and the narration is extensive.

In these accounts, the interpretation of God's statement, "(They are) brothers, (reclining) on couches facing one another" is elucidated in two ways: One is that no one will look into the faults of another, and the other is that friends for the sake of God will look at each other. These interpretations hint at the idea that the 'facing one another' in the verse symbolizes the absence of tracking each other's faults and mistakes, something that

people with resentment in their hearts would do. It is a subtle yet meaningful interpretation.

The Prophet's recitation of the verse (15:47) is merely from the perspective of flow and applicability, not that the verse was revealed specifically about the Ahl al-Bayt. The context of the verses does not fit this notion at all.

Similar accounts include narrations from ʿAlī stating that the verse was revealed about the people of Badr. In another narration from him, it is said to have been revealed about Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. A different narration from ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon them) says it was revealed about Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿAlī. Other accounts attribute the revelation to various combinations of the early companions, including ʿAlī, ʿUthmān, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, and others, as well as one narration from Ibn ʿAbbās stating that it was revealed concerning ten individuals including Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, Saʿd, Saʿīd, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, and ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd.

Despite the variations in these narrations, they are applications (of the verse) by the narrators, not explicit explanations of the verse's revelation. The context of this verse, within a series of verses describing God's decrees and judgments from the time of Adam's creation, involving the angels and Iblīs, strongly suggests that the verse was not revealed specifically about any of the aforementioned individuals.

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## Verses 49-84

After discussing how they mocked the Prophet and the revelation sent to him, as well as their demand for angels even though they would not believe even if presented with the clearest signs, the Almighty elucidates in these verses both a message of glad tidings and a warning. This dual message is encapsulated in His words: "*Tell My slaves that I am the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful, but also that My punishment is the Painful Punishment*" (15:49-50). God then reinforces and clarifies this dual message through a comprehensive narrative that includes both aspects: the story of Abraham's guests. In this story, Abraham receives a promise that is usually beyond expectation, while the people of Lot face one of the harshest forms of punishment.

Subsequently, God provides a summarizing hint towards the torment of the People of *Aykah* (Thicket), who were the followers of Shuʿayb, and the People of *Al-Ḥijr*, who were the Thamūd, the people of Prophet Ṣāliḥ.

Here, the verses serve as a summative proclamation of both good news and a stern warning, reinforced through historical events that embody these two facets.

نَبِّئْ عِبَادِى أَنِّى أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِى هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ ﴿٥٠﴾

**(15:49-50) Inform My servants that I am indeed the All-forgiving, the All-merciful and that My punishment is a painful punishment.**

The term *ʿibādī* (My servants) in the context of these verses refers broadly to all servants, without giving special attention to what some have mentioned—that the intended subjects are the pious ones previously mentioned or the sincere ones.

The emphasis achieved by using the nominal sentence structure, along with the particle *inna* (indeed), the disjunctive pronoun, and the *lām* in the predicate, serves to underscore the attributes mentioned, specifically

*maghfirah* (forgiveness), *raḥmah* (mercy), and the severity of punishment.[1]

These attributes are portrayed in their ultimate sense, to the point that they defy quantification or comparison with anything else. In ordinary circumstances, any form of forgiveness or mercy could be subject to potential obstacles that may hinder its dispensation, or limitations that could define and confine it. However, He, Sublime is He, governs in an absolute manner, unchallenged in His rulings and unopposed by any obstacles. Nothing can inhibit the realization of His *maghfirah* and *raḥmah*, except by His own volitional decree, Glorified and Exalted is He. As a result, it is not for anyone to despair of His forgiveness or to lose hope in His spirit and mercy, based on the existence of any conceivable impediments or constraints. This is unless one fears God Himself, as stated in the verse: "*Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed Allah will forgive all sins. Indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful*" (al-Zumar:54).

No one should underestimate His retribution or harbor the notion that God lacks the capability to enact it. Additionally, one should never be complacent about His strategies. God maintains ultimate dominion over all His matters, and it's solely the ill-fated who believe they're beyond God's plans.

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٥١﴾

(15:51) And inform them about the guests of Abraham,

The term *al-Ḍayf* (guest) is well-known and can refer to both singular and plural forms. It may have plural forms like *aḍḍiyāf* (guests) and *ḍuyūf* (guests), and there's a dual form *ḍayfān* (two guests). However, the most eloquent usage, as mentioned, is to neither make it dual nor plural, because it is originally derived from a verbal noun.

By *al-Ḍayf* (guest), it refers to the honored angels (*al-malā'ikah al-mukramūn*) who were sent with the good news of a son to Abraham and the destruction of the people of Lot. They were termed as "guests" because they appeared to him in the guise of guests.

1 Editor's note: In other words, the use of specific linguistic elements intensifies the highlighting of certain attributes, notably forgiveness, mercy, and the severity of punishment.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ
إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

(15:52-53) when they entered into his presence, and said, 'Peace!' He said, 'We are indeed afraid of you.' They said, 'Do not be afraid. Indeed we give you the good news of a wise son.'

The plural pronouns in *dakhulū* (entered) and *qālū* (said) are indicative of the angels. Their salutation *salāman* (Peace) conveys respect and recognition, essentially saying, "We extend peace to you." Abraham's remark, *innā minkum wajilūn* (We are indeed afraid of you), utilizes the word *wajilūn*, signifying "we are afraid." The term *al-wajl* is synonymous with *khawf*, denoting "fear."

Abraham expressed this sentiment to the angels only after they had settled in and he had presented a roasted calf to them. When he noticed that they did not eat from it and their hands did not reach out to the food, he felt uneasy and began to fear them, as depicted in the chapter of Hūd. The story is mentioned in a summarized manner.

Their response, *lā tawjal* (Do not be afraid), was meant to calm Abraham's apprehensions, assure him, and comfort him by revealing that they were messengers from his Lord, sent to give him the good news of a knowledgeable boy—implying a son who would be both young and wise. It's possible that this refers to the divine knowledge and revelation bestowed upon the child, drawing a parallel to another verse which states, "*And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet, one of the righteous*" (al-Ṣāffāt:112).

قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَى أَنْ مَسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمَ تُبَشِّرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

(15:54) He said, 'Do you give me good news though old age has befallen me? What is the good news that you bring me?'

Abraham received the good news when he was an elderly man, advanced in age, without any offspring from his wife, and the usual hopes of having a child seemed bleak. Even though he was careful never to lose hope in the mercy of God and the power of His will, he expressed amazement and sought clarification: How could they bring him tidings of a child given his current circumstances? And considering his wife was an old and barren

woman, as mentioned in another part of the Divine discourse.

The statement, "*Do you give me good news though old age has befallen me?*" where *al-kibr* refers to old age, and being "touched or befallen" (*massahu*) by it means the impact of aging he felt due to the waning of his youth and the decline of his strength. The essence of this remark is that he is expressing astonishment at their tidings, considering he is an old man whose youth has faded and his bodily strength diminished. Customarily, someone in his state wouldn't expect to have a child.

The phrase "*What is the good news that you bring me?*" builds upon his previous statement regarding old age, "*old age has befallen me*." This is an inquiry about the nature of their tidings, as if he harbors doubt that their good news is about a forthcoming child, despite their explicit mention of it. Essentially, he's asking, "What exactly are you giving glad tidings of?" Because what appears from their words is astonishing. This manner of speech is common; when someone is informed of something they find improbable or hard to believe, they might respond with questions like, "What are you saying?," "What do you mean?," or "What are you trying to convey?"

قَالُوا بَشَّرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْقَانِطِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

> (15:55-56) They said, 'We bring you good news in truth, so do not be among the despondent.' He said, 'Who despairs of his Lord's mercy except those who are astray?'

The particle "*bi*" in *bi al-ḥaqq* (in or with the truth) implies association, meaning that their glad tidings are inseparably tied to the truth. It should not be dismissed with skepticism, lest one becomes of those who despair of God's mercy. This is the angels' response, and in a rhetorical manner, Abraham countered, saying, "*Who despairs of his Lords' mercy except those who are astray*?" The interrogative form here is used for negation, implying that despairing of God's mercy is a characteristic of those who are astray. And he, Abraham, is not one of them; hence, his inquiry is not borne out of despair or disbelief.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(15:57) He said, 'O messengers what is now your errand?'

The term *al-khaṭb* (errand) refers to a significant matter or a grand affair. Their reference to the messengers indicates that they had mentioned this to him previously. The meaning of the verse is clear.

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾
إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَا إِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

(15:58-60) They said, 'We have been sent toward a guilty people, (who shall perish) people who are evildoers—except the family of Lot. We will indeed deliver all of them except his wife (who) We have ordained, will indeed be among those who remain behind.'

al-Rāghib says in his *al-Mufradāt*: "*al-Ghābir* refers to one who remains after the departure of those with him. God says, "*Except an old woman among those who stayed behind*" (al-Ṣāffāt:135) meaning among those who lived long lives. It is also said to mean those who remained and did not journey with Lot, and others interpret it as those who were left behind during the punishment. Another verse mentions, '*Except for his wife. She was one of those who stayed behind*' (al-A'rāf:83). Another instance is, '*We have ordained, will indeed be among those who remain behind* (al-Ghābirīn)' (15;60). He continues to say, "*al-Ghubār* refers to what remains of the dust that is stirred up. It is structured similarly to *al-dukhān*, *al-'uthār*, and the like, referring to remnants."

Perhaps from here, what is sometimes termed as the past and the future together can be called *ghābir*. As for the past, it is considered *ghābir* in the sense that it remains in what has passed and did not transition into the present time. As for the future, it is termed *ghābir* in the sense that it persists and has not yet passed like the past has.

The verses are the angels' response to Abraham's question. They said, "*We have been sent*" by God, the Exalted, "*toward a guilty people*." The angels didn't specify them by name, refraining from uttering their name out of aversion. However, the forthcoming speech identifies them. They then made an exception and said: "*Except the family of Lot*," referring to Prophet Lot and those close to him. This suggests that these people were Lot's community. The angels emphasized, "*We will indeed deliver all of them*," meaning we will deliver them from the punishment, "all together."

The context implies that this exception is distinct.[1]

They then made another exception, excluding Lot's wife from his family, indicating that salvation would not encompass her and that she would be subjected to the punishment and be destroyed. They said, "*except his wife* (*who*) *We have ordained, will indeed be among those who remain behind,*" referring to those who will stay behind from the community after the departure of Lot's family from their town.

We have previously detailed the discourse regarding Abraham's guests in Sūrah Hūd, which is found in the tenth section of the book.[2] We conducted an independent study on it there.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ آلَ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(15:61-62) So when the Messengers came to Lot's family, he said, 'You are indeed strangers (to me).'

Lot said that to them because they appeared in the forms of handsome young men. He was deeply troubled by what he saw of them, especially given the immoral behavior of his people, as previously mentioned in Sūrah Hūd. The meaning is evident.

قَالُوا بَلْ جِئْنَاكَ بِمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَأَتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ﴿٦٤﴾

(15:63-64) They said, 'Rather we bring you what they used to doubt. We bring you the truth, and indeed we speak truly.'

The term *imtirā'* is derived from *al-muryah*, which means doubt (*shakk*). The meaning is: What they doubted or were skeptical about, as referred to in "*what they used to doubt,*" is the punishment that Lot had been warning them about. By saying "*We bring you the truth,*" it means enforcing a just decision regarding the matter of the people, from which there is no deviation. This is similar to another verse where it is mentioned: "*and an irrevocable punishment shall overtake them*" (Hūd:76). Some say

1 Translator's note: Because Lot and his family were not guilty, their exception is continuous.

2 See Eng. vol. 21. (Ed.)

the intended meaning is "we brought you a punishment about which there is no doubt." However, the aforementioned explanation is more likely.

In the verses of the story, there is an apparent sequence of events that doesn't necessarily align with their chronological order of revelation. This isn't about misplacing later-revealed sections in earlier positions or vice-versa. Rather, it's about God mentioning certain parts of the story out of their natural order for specific wisdom and subtleties that necessitated such arrangement.

The story, based on its segments as mentioned by God in Sūrah Ḥūd and other chapters, can be arranged in the following sequence:

First, the verse that states: "*So when the messengers came to Lot's family...*" up to the completion of two verses before the rest (15:61-62).

Next, the statement: "*The people of the city came, rejoicing...*" up to the completion of six verses (15:67-72).

Then, "*They said, 'Rather we bring you...'*" up to the completion of four verses (15:63-66).

Lastly, "*So the Cry seized them...*" to the end of the verse (15:73).

In reality, the sequencing of these events in the story signifies that the narrative is divided into four sections. The third section has been positioned between the first and the second. Specifically, the part which says, "*The people of the city came...*" and what follows was delayed in its mention, so that its end, which is, "*they were bewildered in their drunkenness*," connects with the beginning of the last section: "*So the Cry seized them at sunrise*." This arrangement serves to emphasize the purpose of citing this story and to elucidate more clearly the sudden descent of a tremendous punishment, similar to their punishment, at a moment when they were intoxicated and felt safe, never anticipating such an event. This creates a profound shock and deepens the regret, intensifying the pain of the punishment.

Similarly, hinting at this subtlety, there's a connection in the upcoming story of the "People of the Rock" between the phrase, "*They used to hew out dwellings from mountains, feeling secure*," and "*So the Cry seized them at dawn*."[1] All of this is to clarify the meaning of the statement of

1 Editor's note: The subtlety in the passage lies in the juxtaposition of the perceived security of the "People of the Rock" and the sudden and unexpected onset of divine punishment. The narrative highlights two contrasting

the Almighty at the beginning of the discourse: "*And My punishment is a painful punishment*."[1] So, understand this.

فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ أَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُوا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

(15:65) 'Take your family in a watch of the night; and follow in their rear, and none of you should turn around, and proceed as you are bidden.'

Referring to the end of the verse, *Isrâ* means night travel. So when it is said, "in the dead of night," it reinforces this meaning. In the 'dead of night' means a segment taken from it. The implication of 'following behind' means to walk behind them, ensuring that no one lags behind or is left out and urging them to march swiftly. This is further emphasized by the phrase, "None of you must look back."

The meaning is: When We bring upon you a punishment that is irrevocable and a decree from God is set in motion, it is incumbent upon you to journey with your family at night. You should be at their rear to ensure they don't lag behind or take the journey lightly. None of you should look back, and proceed where you are commanded. This suggests that they had a divine guidance leading them and a leader directing them."

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هَؤُلَاءِ مَقْطُوعٌ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(15:66) We apprised him of the matter that these[2] will be rooted out by dawn.

The concept of Divine Decree or Matter (*qaḍā'*) is inherently embedded within the meaning of revelation. This is why it is associated with the particle "*ilā*" ("to" as some have said). The intended meaning by "matter"

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scenarios: a false sense of security and the unexpected punishment.

1 Editor's note: "And My punishment is a painful punishment," serves as a poignant reminder of His might and the reality that His retribution, when it comes, can be swift, unexpected, and overwhelming, irrespective of human preparations or perceptions of safety.

2 That is, the people of Sodom. (Ed.)

here is the command of punishment, as explained by the phrase: "*that these will be rooted out by dawn*." The reference to it with the demonstrative pronoun "that" (*dhālika*) indicates the gravity and seriousness of the situation.[1]

The meaning is: "We decreed Our momentous command concerning their punishment, revealing this to Lot, which means that the legacy of these people, whatever might remain after them from offspring, structures, and deeds, will be completely severed as they face their end by morning." Alternatively, the understanding could be: "We revealed to him our judgment (or decree), etc."

وَجَاءَ أَهْلُ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ ضَيْفِي فَلَا تَفْضَحُونِ ﴿٦٨﴾
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ هَؤُلَاءِ
بَنَاتِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

(15:67-71) The people of the city came, rejoicing. He said, 'These are indeed my guests. Do not bring dishonor on me. Be wary of Allah and do not humiliate me.' They said, 'Did we not forbid you from (defending[2]) strangers?' He said, 'These are my daughters, (marry them) if you should do anything.'

The attribution of arrival to the people of the city indicates that they were a significant group, aptly named the "people of the city" due to their large numbers.

The verses elucidate that a substantial gathering from the city approached Lot, attracted to his guests, exuberantly sharing the news among those with unsavory desires about these newcomers. In his guests' defense, Lot pleaded, "*These are indeed my guests. Do not bring dishonor on me. Be wary of Allah and do not humiliate me.*" The city's antagonistic individuals retorted, "*Did we not forbid you from* (*defending*) *strangers?*" meaning, did we not forbid you to entertain them, shelter them, advocate for them, or shield them? Facing their unwavering defiance, Lot, in an act of desperation, suggested his daughters as potential spouses to deter

1 Translator's note: This demonstrative pronoun is normally used for something which is distant.

2 Or, from entertaining. (Ed.)

them from his guests, mirroring the narrative we earlier expounded upon in Sūrah Hūd: "*These are my daughters,* (*marry them*) *if you should do anything.*"

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾
فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

**(15:72-74) By your life! They were bewildered in their drunkenness! So the Cry seized them at sunrise, and We made its topmost part its nethermost, and rained on them stones of shale.**

In *al-Mufradāt*, Al-Rāghib says: "The term '*imārah* (build) stands in contrast to *kharāb* (destruction). The word '*amr* signifies the period during which the body is alive or infused with life ('*imārat al-badan bi al-hayāt*). This differs from the concept of eternal existence or remaining (*baqā*'). For instance, when one remarks, 'his life was extended', it conveys the idea that his body continued to house his spirit. It's also noted that the term 'remaining' doesn't inherently imply eternity, as it stands opposite to the idea of ceasing to exist (*fanā*'). The preference of the term remaining over life ('*amr*) is evident when God attributes Himself with 'remaining' rather than 'life' ('*amr*). Whether pronounced with a *dhammah* ('*umr*) or a *fathah* ('*amr*), the essence remains unchanged. However, '*amr* with a *fathah* is specifically chosen when swearing, as seen in the verse: '*By your life! They were bewildered in their drunkenness!*'"

The phrase: By your life! (*la*'*amruka*) is directed towards the Prophet, essentially swearing by his enduring presence. While some argue that this refers to the angels addressing Lot, swearing by Lot's life, the surrounding verses offer no support to this interpretation.

The term *'ammah* (to wander) denotes hesitation arising from confusion. *Sijjīl* refers to the stones of punishment. A detailed explanation of its meaning was previously elaborated in the exegesis of Sūrah Hūd.

The meaning of these verses is: "I swear by your life and your endurance, O Muhammad, that they are indeed in their intoxicated state," which refers to their heedlessness as they immerse themselves in indecencies and wrongdoings, wandering in confusion. "So the Cry seized them," which is a tremendous sound, "at sunrise," meaning while they were in the early light of dawn. Consequently, we inverted their town, turning it upside

down, and rained down upon them stones from the heavens made of baked clay (*sijjīl*).

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

(15:75-77) There are indeed signs in that for the percipient. Indeed it is on a standing road, and there is indeed a sign in that for the faithful.

The term *āyah* (sign) and the intended meaning of *āyāt* (signs) firstly refer to the indicators (*'alāmah*) that evidence the occurrence of the event, as seen from the remnants of the traces. Secondly, by *āyah*, it indicates the sign that serves as a testament to the believers about the truthfulness of the divine warning and call. The term *tawassum* pertains to the ability to discern (or scrutinize) and transition from the outward appearance of things to their true reality.

The meaning of these verses is: "In that—referring to what transpired concerning the people of Loṭ and their lands—there are signs from the remnants of traces for those who are discerning. Indeed, those signs are still evident on the path of the travelers and have not entirely faded or eroded. In that is a sign for the believers, indicating the veracity of the warning and the divine call." Thus, it becomes clear why the terms *āyāt* (plural) and *āyah* (singular) are employed in the two contexts.

وَإِن كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لَظَالِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمَا لَبِإِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٩﴾

(15:78-79) Indeed the inhabitants of Aykah were wrongdoers. So We took vengeance on them, and indeed the two of them[1] are on an open highway.

The term *aykah* is singular of *ayk* (thicket), which refers to trees that are intertwined with one another. It is said that the People of Aykah were situated in a *ghaydah*, meaning a dense patch of trees.

These people, as mentioned, are believed to be the people of Prophet

1 That is, Sodom and Aykah. (Ed.)

Shu'ayb or a faction from his community who resided in the dense forested area. Supporting this notion is the subsequent verse that states, "*and indeed the two of them are on an open highway.*" This refers to the location of the people of Loṭ and the people of Aykah being on a distinct path. The path leading from the city (of Medina) to the Levant (al-Sham) traverses the lands of both the people of Loṭ and the people of Shu'ayb. These ruins bear testament to a people whom God destroyed due to their disbelief and their denial of Prophet Shu'ayb's message. Their story has been previously narrated in the chapter of Hūd. The verse "*We took vengeance on them*" specifically refers to the people of Aykah, but it is also said to pertain to both them and the people of Loṭ. The meaning of these verses is self-evident.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ آيَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا
مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَكَانُوا يَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا آمِنِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ
الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(15:80-84) Certainly the inhabitants of Ḥijr denied the messengers. We had given them Our Signs but they disregarded them. They used to hew out dwellings from mountains feeling secure. So the Cry seized them at dawn; and what they used to earn did not avail them.

The people of *al-Ḥijr* are the people of Thamūd, the tribe of Prophet Ṣāliḥ. *al-Ḥijr* is the name of the town they inhabited. The Qur'an counts them among the deniers of all the messengers, though they only denied Prophet Ṣāliḥ who was sent to them. This is because the call of all prophets is essentially one; to deny one prophet is to deny all of them.

As for the verse, "*We had given them Our Signs but they disregarded them,*" if the "signs" here refer to miracles and extraordinary events, as seems apparent, then it primarily concerns the she-camel, its drinking, and the subsequent events until their annihilation. Their story is previously detailed in Sūrah Hūd. If, however, the "signs" refer to the divine knowledge (or teachings) Prophet Ṣāliḥ received and conveyed to them, or a combination of this knowledge and the miraculous sign, then the matter is clear.

The verse, "*They used to hew out dwellings from mountains feeling secure,*" means that they inhabited valleys and caves carved out of stones,

presuming themselves safe from earthly and heavenly calamities.

The phrase, "*So the Cry seized them at dawn*," refers to the Cry of punishment that resulted in their destruction. The relevance of combining notions of 'security' and the 'Cry' in the verses is highlighted by the phrase at the beginning of the verses, which states, "*My punishment is a painful punishment* (15:49)."

Finally, the verse, "*and what they used to earn did not avail them*," refers to their deeds which they assumed would ensure their well-being in life.

## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Hātim narrate from Musʿab b. Thābit who said: The Prophet passed by some of his companions who were laughing. He said, "Remember Paradise and remember Hellfire," after which the verse was revealed: "*Inform My servants that I am indeed the All-forgiving, the All-merciful*."

**Author's comment:** There are other narrations regarding the meaning, but the applicability of the verse to what has been mentioned as its cause remains obscure.

(2) Additionally, Abū Naʿīm reports in *al-Ḥilyah* from Imām al-Sādiq regarding the verse, "*There are indeed signs in that for the percipient*," he said: they are *al-Mutafarrasūn* (the perceptive ones).

(3) In the same source, al-Bukhārī in his history, at-Tirmidhī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Hātim, Ibn al-Sunnī, Abū Naʿīm collectively in *al-Ṭibb*, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Khaṭīb all report from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī who said: The Messenger of God said, "Beware of the perceptiveness of the believer, for he sees with the light of God." Then he recited, "*There are indeed signs in that for the percipient,*" he said they are *al-Mutafarrasūn* (the perceptive ones).

(4) In *al-Ikhtiṣās* of Shaykh al-Mufīd, through his chain of narration from Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Haḍramī, from Imām al-Bāqir, who said: "There is no creature except that between its eyes it is written 'believer' or 'disbeliever.' This is concealed from you but is not concealed from the Imāms of the family of Muḥammad. No one enters upon them without them knowing whether he is

a believer or a disbeliever," then he recited this verse: "*There are indeed signs in that for the percipient*." So they (the Imāms) are *al-Mutawassimūn* (the discerners).

**Author's comment:** The narrations on this subject are abundant and corroborative, although it does not mean that the verse was revealed specifically for them.

(5) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn ʿAsākir report from Ibn ʿUmar who said: The Messenger of God said, "Indeed, the people of Madyan and the People of the Aykah are two nations to whom God sent Shuʿayb."

**Author's comment:** We have included the necessary narrations regarding the stories of the glad tidings to Abraham and the tales of Lot, Shuʿayb, and Ṣāliḥ in the exegesis of Sūrah Hūd in the tenth part of the book,[1] and we suffice with that here. For more details, one should refer back to that section.

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1 Eng. vol. 21. (Ed.)

## Verses 85-99

The verses ultimately focus on the previously stated purpose, which is the command to the Prophet to publicly proclaim what he has been ordered to and to adopt a stance of forbearance and indifference towards the polytheists. He should neither grieve over them nor should his chest become constricted by what they say. It is a part of divine justice to recompense people for their deeds in this world and the Hereafter, particularly on the Day of Judgment. That Day is without doubt, and it is the day when no one will be overlooked, and not even an atom's weight of good or evil will go unnoticed but will be attributed to its doer. Therefore, it is not appropriate to feel sorrow over a disbeliever's disbelief, for God, fully aware of it, will mete out the appropriate recompense. Nor should he grieve over them, for being occupied with God, the Exalted, is more important and obligatory.

Indeed, the Exalted has reiterated His command for pardoning and turning away from those who mock him—those who were mentioned at the beginning of the chapter—and to be engaged in His glorification, praise, and worship. He has informed him that He has sufficed him against their evil. Thus, he should engage in what God has commanded him to do, and with this, the chapter concludes.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ ﴿٨٥﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨٦﴾

(15:85-86) And We did not create the heavens and earth and whatever is between them, except with the Truth,[1] and indeed the Hour is bound to come. So forbear with a graceful forbearance. Indeed your Lord is the All-creator, the All-knowing.

In the verse where it says "with the Truth" (*bi al-ḥaqq*), the particle

1 Or, "with reason" (Ed.)

"*ba*" is for companionship.[1] This means that the entire creation is inseparably bound to the Truth and is in accordance with it. For creation has an ultimate purpose to which it will return. God says, "*Truly it is to your Lord that you will return*" (al-'Alaq:8). If it were not for this, then creation would have been a futile game. God says, "We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them for play. We did not create them except with reason" (al-Dukhān:38-39). He also says, "*And We did not create the heaven and the earth and everything between them without purpose*" (Ṣād:27). The evidence that the meaning of "the Truth" here contrasts with vain play[2] is the appending of the statement "*Indeed, the Hour is bound to come*," which is evident.

This exposes the flawed interpretation by some who claim that *bi al-ḥaqq* (with the Truth) here refers to justice and fairness, and that the "*ba*" is for causality. According to this view, the meaning would be that the creation was made solely due to justice and fairness on the Day of Judgment based on deeds.

The notion that *al-ḥaqq* in the verse means justice and fairness finds no support in the language. Rather, the meaning mentioned aligns with the interpretation that the "*ba*" is for companionship or purpose, rather than for causality.

Equally false is the suggestion by some that the term "the Truth" (*al-ḥaqq*) refers to wisdom and that the first statement "*And We did not create the heavens and earth and whatever is between them, except with the Truth,*" pertains to worldly punishment, while the second statement "*indeed the Hour is bound to come. So forbear with a graceful forbearance,*" refers to punishment in the Hereafter. The meaning thus becomes: "We did not create the heavens and the earth and everything between them except as imbued with Truth and wisdom. Such a state precludes the persistence of corruption and the stability of evil deeds. Wisdom necessitates

1 Editor's note: In Arabic, the particle "*ba*" can serve various grammatical and semantic functions depending on the context. One of its functions is to indicate "companionship" or "inseparability" between two entities.

2 Translator's note: The author uses the expression *lā'ib bāṭil*. This would be rendered as "vain play" in a more literal linguistic translation. In the context of Islamic theology and exegesis, this term is often used to convey the idea that the creation of the heavens and the earth is not a frivolous or meaningless act.

the destruction of individuals like these both to curb their corruption and to guide those who remain towards righteousness. Indeed, *the Hour is bound to come*, during which retribution will also be taken against individuals like these."

The verse also sparks a debate between the proponents of determinism (*Jabr*) and delegation (*Tafwīḍ*). Each of the two groups uses the verse to support their own view.[1] The advocates of determinism argue that the actions of God's servants are created by Him, as their deeds are part of what exists between the heavens and the earth and are therefore created by Him.

The proponents of delegation (*Tafwīḍ*) use this verse as evidence to argue that the actions of servants are not created by God but rather originate from themselves. This is because sins and immoral deeds are considered falsehood (*bāṭil*), and if they were created by God, they would have to be created "with the Truth" (*bi al-ḥaqq*). Falsehood cannot be created "with the Truth."

The truth is that both arguments are flawed, for the aspects of immorality and disobedience in actions are essentially non-existential qualities. Obedience and disobedience, much like marriage and adultery or legitimately earning wealth and acquiring it unlawfully, share the same fundamental action. They only differ based on whether they align with or contradict the commandment, and contradiction is a non-existential aspect.

If this is the case, then attributing the action to creation from the standpoint of existence does not necessitate attributing immorality or disobedience to it. This is because these aspects are non-existential. Therefore, an action, in its non-existential aspect, is not among what is between the heavens and the earth to be included in the verse. Nor, in its existential aspect, is it falsehood (*bāṭil*) so that its creation would be considered creation of falsehood "with the Truth" (*bi al-ḥaqq*).[2]

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1 Translator's note: The author employs the use of an Arabic proverb which would literally be translated as "each of them is dragging the fire to their loaf of bread."

2 Editor's note: The author argues that both sides in a theological debate are wrong about whether God creates good or bad actions. He says actions are neither good nor bad on their own; they become so based on divine commandments. So, attributing moral qualities to actions as if they're inherent doesn't make sense according to the text.

The essence is that necessity is based on the system of cause and effect in existence. When the existence of something is contingent upon something else, so that it cannot be independent of it, this is the crux of attribution. Thus, the one attributed with obedience or disobedience, and with the goodness or badness of an action, is the human being, not the One who created him and enabled him to act in such and such ways. Similarly, the one attributed with colors like black or white is the body in which these colors manifest, not the One who created it.

We presented a comprehensive discussion on this topic in the explanation of the verse, "*and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors*" (al-Baqarah:26), in the first volume of the book.

Regarding the statement, "*So forbear with a graceful forbearance. Indeed your Lord is the All-creator, the All-knowing*," al-Rāghib says in his *al-Mufradāt*:

> "The term *Ṣafḥ* means the surface or the side of something, like the face's surface, the blade of a sword, or the surface of a stone. *Ṣafḥ* also signifies leaving grievances behind, and it is more expressive than forgiveness (*'Afū*). For this reason, He said, '*Yet excuse and forbear until Allah issues His edict*' (al-Baqarah:109). A person may forgive but not overlook. The Most High said, '*So disregard them and say, 'Peace!...*'" (al-Zukhrūf:89) and '*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*,' (15:85) and '*Shall We hold the Reminder from you...*' (al-Zukhrūf:5).
>
> "To 'overlook' (*Ṣafḥat*) someone is to turn away from his sin gracefully. Either you meet him turning away from him, or you pass over the part of the book where his sin is documented to another part, as when you say you 'scanned' the book. His saying, '*The Hour is bound to come, so forbear with a graceful forbearance*,' is a command to him to alleviate disbelief from those who disbelieve, as He also said, '*And do not grieve over them, and do not be upset by their guile*' (al-Naml:70). The term *Muṣāfaḥah* refers to extending the surface (*Ṣafḥ*) of the hand in greeting."

The upcoming section will include the narration explaining that 'Ali interpreted *Ṣafḥ* (overlooking) as forgiveness without reproach.

Regarding the clause, "*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*," this is an elaboration on the preceding point. That is, if creation is by Truth, and

there is an inevitable Day of Judgment where all will be held accountable, then do not concern yourself with the disbelief and mockery you observe from them. Forgive them without entering into reproach or debates with them. Indeed, your Lord who created you and them is all-knowing of your states, and there is a forthcoming Day that they cannot escape.

From this, it becomes evident that His saying, "*Indeed, your Lord is the All-creator, the All-knowing*," serves as a rationale for His earlier statement, "*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*."

These bordering verses, leading to His saying, "*So proclaim what you have been commanded*," serve as a comfort to the Prophet and a means to uplift his spirit so that his directive, "*So proclaim what you have been commanded*," can be fulfilled. As identified at the beginning of the chapter, the primary objective is the command to proclaim the message. Reflecting on the preceding verses, it is clear that they serve as a solace to him from the harm, insult, and mockery he encountered from his people, directing him towards the intended mandate.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(15:87) Certainly We have given you the seven oft-repeated (verses) and the great Qur'an.

The term "seven oft-repeated" (*sab'an min al-mathānī*) refers to Sūrah al-Hamd (al-Fatiha) as explained in numerous traditions from the Prophet and the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt. One should not pay attention to some of the other interpretations stating that these seven are the long chapters, or the seven chapters beginning with the disjointed letters, *ḥā* and *mīm*, or claims that they are seven scrolls sent down to the Prophets. There is no evidence for these claims either in the text of the Book or from the perspective of tradition.

The scholars have had differing opinions concerning His phrase "oft-repeated" in terms of whether the particle "from" (*min*) is for partial enumeration or for clarification, and also regarding how the term *mathānī* (oft-repeated) is derived and why they are named as such.

What ought to be said— and God knows best— is that "from" (*min*) here is for partial enumeration. For God has named all the verses of His Book "often repeated" when He said, "*A Book consistent in its frequent repetitions. The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble at it...*," (al-Zumar:23).

The verses of Sūrah al-Hamd are part of this larger category and thus are some of the "oft repeated," not all of them.

It appears that the term *mathānī* is the plural of *mathnīya*, a nominal form derived from *thanī* meaning to bend, fold, or repeat. God says, "*They wrap themselves around*," (Hūd:5). Qur'anic verses are called *mathānī* because some verses clarify others and bend and fold (or wrap) around each other, as is evident in the phrase "*A Book consistent in its frequent repetitions*" (al-Zumar:23), which combines the similarity of some verses with others and their being *mathānī*. The Prophet described the Qur'an as, "One part of it confirms the other," and from ʿAlī when he said, "One part speaks of the other, and one part bears witness to the other." Alternatively, *mathānī* could be a plural of *muthannā*, meaning repetition or recurrence, indicating how some verses explain others.

This understanding should suffice, going beyond various meanings offered in commentaries like *al-Kashshāf*, *al-Ḥāshiyah ʿalā al-Kashshāf*, *Majma' al-bayyān al-bayān*, *Rūh al-maʿānī* and others. Some say that the Qur'anic verses are named *mathānī* due to the repetition of meanings within them. Others say that al-Fātiḥa is called *mathānī* (Oft-repeated) because it is obligatory to recite it twice in every prayer or because it is repeated in each *rakʿah* with what is recited after it. Yet others suggest that many of its words are repeated, like *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, or *iyyāka*, *al-Ṣirāṭ*, and *ʿalayhim*, or because it was revealed twice—once in Mecca and once in Medina, or due to its praise of God. Another view is that God has reserved it for this Ummah and did not reveal it to previous nations, as mentioned in certain narrations. There are other perspectives presented in various exegeses as well.

In the statement, "*seven oft-repeated* (*verses*) *and the great Qur'an*," the greatness of both al-Fātiḥa and the Qur'an is evident. As for the Qur'an, it is described as "Magnificent," highlighting its grandeur and majesty. Concerning al-Fātiḥa, it is referred to simply as "Seven," an indefinite noun without any descriptive attributes. This in itself serves as an indication of its immense value and the loftiness of its status. It is paired with the Great Qur'an, of which it is a part. This non-descriptive reference subtly hints at its monumental significance, which is beyond dispute.[1]

1 Editor's note: The relationship between (sūrah) al-Fātiḥa and the Qur'an is

The verse, as it becomes clear, is set in the context of expressing gratitude. Yet, given its place within the discourse urging forgiveness and turning away, it implies that this immense gift—which encompasses divine truths leading to ultimate perfection and happiness, by God's permission—also motivates you towards beautiful forbearance. It encourages you to focus on your Lord and to immerse yourself in His obedience.

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٩﴾

(15:88-89) Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided to certain groups of them, and do not grieve for them and lower your wing to the faithful, and Say: 'I am indeed a manifest warner.'

These two verses are situated in the context of elaborating on the "graceful forbearance" that has been previously commanded. For this reason, the discourse is presented in a resumptive form.

Within them, four commands are mentioned: two negations and two affirmations. Regarding the verse, "*Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided to certain groups of them*," extending one's eyes to what others have been blessed with in terms of worldly luxuries is metaphorically indicating exceeding the boundary of being grateful for what God has provided. The term "groups" refers to men and women, or could signify different kinds of people such as polytheists, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. The meaning is: do not stray from appreciating the blessings—both overt and covert—that We have given you to what We have provided for a few groups or types of disbelievers.

Some interpreters take the phrase "*Do not extend your glance*" as a

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one of symbiotic importance. Often dubbed the "essence of the Qur'an," al-Fātiḥa serves as a prologue to the entire Holy Book, encapsulating its core themes such as monotheism, divine compassion, and the Day of Judgment. It is recited in every unit of the Muslim prayer, underscoring its centrality to Islamic practice. Its designation as the "Seven Oft-repeated (verses)" highlights the frequency and significance of its recitation. At the same time, the Qur'an is described as "Magnificent," and al-Fātiḥa, by being mentioned alongside it, shares in this grandeur.

metaphor for lingering and continual gazing. However, it's important to note that the main objective here is to caution against desire, inclination, and emotional attachment to the worldly pleasures in their possession, such as wealth, power, and reputation. They say that what is actually prohibited is the very act of looking at these things, not just lingering or continual gazing. This will be corroborated by what we will later quote from the verse of Sūrah al-Kahf.

Regarding the phrase "*and do not grieve for them*," it refers to their persistence in denial, mockery, and their determination not to believe in you.

As for the phrase "*and lower your wing to the faithful*," it is interpreted to mean demonstrating humility and gentleness. The origin of this phrase stems from the behavior of a bird that wishes to bring its chicks closer; it spreads its wings over them and then lowers it. This action symbolizes humility and gentleness.

What has been cited can indeed find support in other verses. For instance, consider the verse: "*It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them*" (Āl-'Imrān:159), or the description of the Prophet as "*and is most kind and merciful to the faithful*" (al-Tawba:128). However, the most relevant context for interpreting "lowering the wing" (*khafḍ al-janāḥ*) is the concept of showing patience towards the believers. This metaphor aptly encapsulates the idea of embracing the believers, focusing on fostering their spiritual growth, and educating them in divine etiquette. It could also signify unwavering companionship with them, maintaining closeness without departure. This is akin to how a bird lowers its wings over its fledglings, neither flying away nor leaving them. As the Almighty says, "*Content yourself with the company of those who supplicate their Lord morning and evening, desiring His Face, and do not lose sight of them, desiring the glitter of the life of this world*" (al-Kahf:28).

The statement, "*Say: 'I am indeed a manifest warner*,'" emphasizes that my sole role is to be a warner who alerts you to God's impending punishment. I provide explicit guidance on what requires clarification, and beyond that, I have no other directives.

These four principles (or commands)—I mean, avoiding the longing for worldly pleasures they possess, abstaining from sorrow over their disbelief and mockery, extending kindness and humility towards believers (that is, taking them under the wing), and affirming that he is a clear

warner—collectively constitute the graceful forbearance befitting the Prophet. If any one of these elements were missing, the overall integrity would be compromised.

This observation also clarifies that the claims of some, who argue that the directive "*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*" has been abrogated by the 'Verse of the Sword,' are unfounded. The forbearance (to turn away graciously) prescribed by this verse, further elucidated by the saying "Do not direct your eyes longingly," remains applicable and relevant, even after the revelation of the 'Verse of the Sword.'[1] Therefore, there is no basis for claiming its abrogation.

كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ فَوَرَبِّكَ
لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

**(15:90-93) Even as We sent down on the dividers, who reduced the Qur'an into pieces, by your Lord, We will question them all, concerning what they used to do!**

*Majma' al-bayyān* elucidates: "The term *'iḍīn* serves as the plural for *'aḍḍah* (meaning 'a piece'). It originates from the base word *'aḍwah*. In this context, the letter *waw* is omitted, hence its pluralization with *nūn*. This construct mirrors that of *'izwah* and its plural form, *'izwūn*, with the foundational word being *'azwah*. The term *ta'ḍiyah* translates to 'separation', derived from *'aḍā* signifying 'parts'. Thus, when one proclaims *aḍḍaytu al-shay*, it conveys the act of segmenting or dividing an entity into segments. The poet Ru'bah poetically asserts: 'God's religion remains undivided.'"

The statement, "*Even as We sent down on the dividers*," in its context, suggests a reference to a predetermined matter alluded to by the subsequent phrase: "*Say, 'Indeed, I am a manifest warner*,'" implying a warning of a punishment to be sent down upon you, just as it was sent down upon the dividers. The "dividers" (*muqtasimūn*) in reference here are those

1 Editor's note: The "Verse of the Sword" refers to a specific verse in the Qur'an, specifically al-Tawbah:5. The verse is often cited in discussions around the rules of warfare and engagement in Islamic jurisprudence. It's important to note that the verse is a subject of various interpretations and must be understood in its historical and textual context, which includes the conditions and events that were prevalent at the time of its revelation.

described later as "those who have reduced the Qur'an into pieces." Based on narrations, these dividers were a group from the disbelievers of Quraysh who fragmented the Qur'an. They claimed it to be magic, regarded it as ancient legends, and labeled it as fabricated. They stationed themselves at the entrances to Mecca's paths, especially during the pilgrimage season, seeking to deter incoming people from approaching the Prophet Muhammad. This will be elaborated upon in the subsequent narrative discussion, God willing.

It is said that the clause, "*Even as We sent down*," is connected to the preceding statement: "*Certainly We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses*," meaning: We revealed the Qur'an to you just as We sent it down upon the dividers. The dividers (*muqtasimūn*) referred to here are the Jews and Christians who divided the Qur'an into sections and parts, saying they believe in some of it and disbelieve in others.[1]

The sūrah (as we have indicated) is Meccan, revealed during the early days of the Prophetic mission. At that time, Islam had not yet faced the particular challenges from the Jews and Christians. Their statement, "*Believe in what has been sent down to the faithful at the beginning of the day, and disbelieve at its end*," (Āl-ʿImrān:72), was made by the Jews after the migration to Medina, as were similar statements. The context of the verses supports what we have mentioned.

It has also been suggested that they were termed "the dividers" (*al-muqtasimūn*) because they divided among God's prophets and His revealed scriptures; they believed in some and disbelieved in others. However, this notion is countered by the subsequent verse that explains *al-muqtasimūn* as those who reduced the Qur'an into pieces, and not those who differentiated between God's prophets or His books.

The apparent understanding is that these verses refer to a group that emerged in the early days of the Prophetic mission, aiming to extinguish the light of the Qur'an and fragment it to divert people from God's path. As a result, God brought down punishment upon them and destroyed them. These individuals are mentioned in the verses, after which God reveals the fate of their actions by stating, "By your Lord, We will question them all,

1 This understanding is refuted by the author in the next paragraph. In other words, it doesn't align with the chapter being Meccan. (Ed.)

concerning what they used to do."

فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾
الَّذِينَ يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

(15:94-96) So proclaim what you have been commanded and turn away from the polytheists. Indeed We will suffice you against the deriders—those who set up besides Allah another god. Soon they will know!

*Majma' al-bayyān* says: "The words *ṣad'*, *farq*, and *faṣl* all have a similar meaning (that is, 'to differentiate'). The term *ṣada'a bi al-ḥaqq* means 'to proclaim it openly.'"

The verse is an extension of what was previously mentioned. It's only right for it to branch out, as it essentially represents the core purpose of the chapter. This means: "When the situation is as described, and you are commanded to turn away graciously and be a warner of Our punishment, just as we sent to the dividers, then express the word of truth and proclaim the call openly."

Thus, it becomes evident that the phrase "*Indeed We will suffice you against the deriders*" serves as an explanation or justification for His statement "So proclaim" and so on. The context implies, or indicates, that these mockers are the very same dividers mentioned earlier. The essence of the verse is: If matters are as we've described, and you are a warner of Our punishment, as We have sent down upon those dividers, then "*Proclaim what you have been commanded*," announce the call, and make the truth known. "*And turn away from the polytheists*," because "*We will suffice you against the deriders*," as we punish them. They are the ones "*who set up besides Allah another god. Soon they will know.*"

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

(15:97) Certainly We know that you have become upset because of what they say.

This verse returns again to the Prophet's sorrow and the tightness he felt in his heart due to their mockery. This was done to further comfort, console, and strengthen his spirit. The Exalted has frequently addressed

this in the Qur'an, especially in the Meccan chapters, due to the profound impact it had on him.

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴿٩٩﴾

(15:98-99) So celebrate the praise of your Lord with praise and be among those who prostrate, and worship your Lord until certainty comes to you.

God enjoins the Prophet to engage in glorification, praise, prostration and continuous worship as a means to alleviate the distress he felt from their words. Such acts serve as solace during distress and adversity. In previous verses, he was instructed to be forbearing and patient. The command for patience can also be inferred from the verse: "*And worship your Lord until certainty* (or, death) *comes to you*." This appears to emphasize patience in devotion for an extended period. This aligns with the divine advice for confronting hardships and enduring through challenges: "*Take recourse in patience and prayer*" (al-Baqarah:153).

This reinforces the notion that by "*those who prostrate*" it is meant "those who pray." Furthermore, prayer has been termed "prostration" in reference to its most noble part. The intended meaning of "glorification" and "praise" is their verbal form, such as saying "Glory be to God" and "Praise be to God" or words with similar meanings. Indeed, if the reference to prayer in the verse al-Baqarah:153 (quoted above) signifies turning towards God in devotion, then the intended meaning of "glorification" and "praise"—or both of them combined with "prostration"—may be their linguistic sense. That is, exalting Him above what they attribute to Him and praising Him for the bounties He has bestowed, expressing one's utter submission and devotion to Him."

As for the statement, "*Worship your Lord until certainty comes to you*," if the intent behind it is to command worship, then it would be an explanation for the preceding verse. However, if the intention is to embrace servitude—as is apparent from the context, especially the context of the previous verses instructing forbearance and turning away, which inherently involve patience—then, by qualifying it with "*until certainty comes to you*," it is a directive to adopt a path of submission, obedience, and fulfilling the

responsibilities of servitude.

Given this understanding, the meaning of "*when certainty comes to you*" refers to the arrival of one's appointed time and the onset of death. Through death, the unseen becomes manifest, and the reported becomes directly witnessed. This meaning is supported by juxtaposing the previous statement "*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*" with "*We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except with reason, and indeed, the Hour is bound to come.*" In essence, the directive is for forgiveness and patience concerning what they say, for there will be a day when God will take retribution from them and reward them based on their deeds. Thus, the verse's implication is to persist in servitude, remain patient in obedience, abstain from disobedience, and endure whatever they say until death overtakes you and the realm of certainty descends upon you. Then, you will witness what God will do to them, O Lord.

In expressions such as "*until certainty comes to you*," there is also a sentiment being conveyed. The emphasis in this phrase suggests that certainty is something one seeks and will eventually grasp. Thus, one should worship their Lord until they attain it and reach this state of clarity. This refers to the realm of the afterlife, which is the world of universal certainty concerning what exists beyond the unseen veil. This is distinct from the assured belief that can potentially be acquired through reflection or devotion.

This highlights the flaw in the argument (by some) that the verse suggests the cessation of religious duties upon attaining certainty. The verse is addressed to the Prophet. Numerous verses from the Book of God indicate that he is among those with firm conviction, that he possesses insight, that he has clear evidence from his Lord, that he is infallible, and that he is guided by the divine guidance of God, among other attributes.

In addition to what we have previously presented regarding the verse's indication that 'certainty' refers to death, we will dedicate a separate intellectual discussion on the continuity of religious duties after completing the narrative study, God willing.

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## Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, both Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn al-Najjār have reported from ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib regarding the verse, "*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*": He said, "It means being content

without reprimanding."

(2) In *Majma' al-bayyān*, it is narrated from 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib: "The graceful forbearance means pardoning without reprimanding."

(3) In *al-'Uyūn Akhbār,* with its chain of narration from 'Ali b. al-Ḥasan b. Faḍāl from his father from Imām al-Riḍā regarding the verse, (*So forbear with a graceful forbearance*) he said, "It means pardoning without reprimanding."

(4) In *al-Tahdhīb*, with its chain of narration from Muḥammad b. Muslim, he said, "I asked Imām al-Sādiq if 'The seven oft-repeated verses' and 'The Great Qur'an' refer to the Opening of the Book?" He replied, "Yes." I asked, "Is 'In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful among the seven?'" He replied, "Yes, it is the best of them."

**Author's comment:** This narration is reported through Shi'a channels from Amīr al-Mu'minīn and more than one of the Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt. It is also transmitted through Sunni channels from 'Ali and several of the Companions such as 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Abū Hurairah, and others.

(5) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Ṭabarānī reported in *al-Awsaṭ* from Ibn 'Abbās who said: A man asked the Messenger of God, regarding the saying of God, "*Even as We sent down on the dividers.*" He replied, "The Jews and the Christians." He then asked about, "(*Those*) *who reduced the Qur'an into pieces.*" The Prophet replied, "They believed in some parts and disbelieved in others."

**Author's comment:** As previously mentioned, the content of the narration doesn't align with the chapter being Meccan.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it's reported from Zurāra, Ḥumrān, and Muḥammad b. Muslim from both Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Sādiq regarding the words, "(*Those*) *who reduced the Qur'an into pieces*," they both said: It refers to the Quraysh.

(7) In *al-Ma'ānī*, as narrated from 'Abdullāh b. 'Alī al-Halabī: I heard Imām al-Sādiq saying: The Messenger of God remained in Mecca for thirteen years after the revelation began. He stayed concealed for three of those years, fearing to make his message public until God, the Blessed and Exalted, commanded him to openly declare what He had instructed. It was then that he made the call public.

(8) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr recorded from Abū ʻUbaydah that ʻAbdullāh b. Mas'ūd said: The Prophet remained in secrecy (about his mission) until the revelation of "*So proclaim what you are commanded*." He then emerged, along with his companions.

(9) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, from Muḥammad b. ʻAlī al-Halabī, narrating from Imām al-Sādiq who said: The Messenger of God stayed in secrecy in Mecca for several years, neither making his message public nor ʻAlī being with him and Khadijah. Then God commanded him to proclaim what he was ordered. The Messenger of God began presenting himself to the Arab tribes. When they encountered him, they would exclaim: "You are a liar! Get away from us."

(10) In the same source, from Abān b. ʻUthmān al-Aḥmar who related: There were five mockers from the Quraysh: al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī, al-'Āṣ b. Wā'il as-Sahmī, al-Hārith b. Ḥanẓala, al-Aswad b. ʻAbd Yaghūth b. Wahb al-Zuhrī, and al-Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Asad. When God revealed, "*Indeed, We will suffice you against the deriders*," the Messenger of God knew that they had been disgraced, and God caused them to die dreadful deaths.

**Author's comment:** This has been reported by al-Sadūq in *al-Ma'ānī al-Akhbār*, from his chain of narrators through Abān. It's also narrated in the same context, and al-Ṭabarsī in *al-Iḥtijāj*, from Mūsā b. Ja'far, from his forefathers, from ʻAlī with the same meaning, and it's a lengthy narration detailing the demise of each of these five (mockers), may God curse them. It's also narrated that these five mockers from the Quraysh were mentioned by ʻAli and Ibn ʻAbbās, along with the reasons for their demise.

However, there are varying narrations in Sunni sources concerning the number, names, and reasons for the destruction of certain events or figures. What has been universally agreed upon by both Sunni and Shia traditions is what we have mentioned earlier.

(11) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Daylamī report a narration from Abi al-Dardā' who heard the Messenger of God say: "I was not commanded to be a merchant or to amass wealth. Rather, I was commanded to '*Glorify your Lord with praise and be of those who prostrate*' and '*Worship your Lord until certainty*

*comes to you*.'"

**Author's comment:** A similar sentiment was narrated by Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn Masʿūd who cited the Messenger of God.

(12) In another account, al-Bukhārī and Ibn Jarīr narrate from Umm al-ʿAlā' as follows: "The Messenger of God visited ʿUthmān b. Mazʿūn after his passing. I said, 'May God's mercy be upon you, O Abu Saʿīb! I bear witness that God has honored you.' He responded, 'How do you know that God has honored him? For him, certainty has now arrived, although I remain hopeful for the best.'"

(13) In *al-Kāfi*, a narration comes from Ḥafs b. Ghayyāth, who states that Imām al-Sādiq said, "Some display a touch of patience, while others reveal slight distress." He then advised: "Exercise patience in all endeavors, for God, the Mighty and Majestic, commissioned Muhammad with the virtues of patience and kindness. He declared, '*and be patient over what they say, and keep away from them in a graceful manner*' (al-Muzzammil:10-11). The Almighty also proclaimed, '*Repel* (*evil*) *with what is best.* (*If you do so*) *behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient*' (Fussilat:34-35). The Prophet Muhammad exemplified patience, even when subjected to immense trials and false accusations. As he felt distressed, God comforted him with, '*Certainly We know that you have become upset because of what they say. So celebrate the praise of your Lord with praise and be among those who prostrate, and worship your Lord until certainty comes to you.*'"

## A Philosophical Discussion on the Existence and Continuity of (Religious) Obligations

It has been previously discussed in this book under the sections on prophethood and the establishment of divine laws that every entity has a specific perfection it strives towards. Each entity pursues this perfection with an inherent movement that aligns with its existence. It doesn't cease this pursuit until it achieves its goal unless there's an external factor that prevents it, such as a tree halting its growth before reaching its full potential due to some afflictions. Additionally, it was also mentioned that deprivation

from achieving these goals is only specific to certain individuals of a species. However, when it comes to the species as a whole, such a concept is inconceivable.

Human beings, as a distinct species, possesses an inherent objective that can only be fulfilled when existing within a socio-political framework. This is evident from the intertwined human dependencies, such as gender differences, emotions, sentiments, and a plethora of indispensable needs.

For this social integration and the establishment of human societies to function, its members require regulations and laws. By adhering to and acting upon these laws, they can organize their diverse affairs, resolve inevitable disagreements, and each individual can find their appropriate position, attaining their happiness and existential fulfillment. In essence, these regulations and operational laws stem from the unique needs inherent in human existence and its distinct creation, encompassing both its physical and spiritual attributes. Furthermore, the distinctiveness of human existence and its creation is intrinsically linked to the unique characteristics of the causes and reasons that bring about human existence within the broader universe.

This implies that religion is innately predispositioned, meaning there is a collection of rules and laws to which human existence guides according to its composition. If you prefer, you could assert that there are essential life principles the broader universe requires. When upheld, they ensure societal harmony and guide individuals toward their ultimate existential goals and desired perfections. If these life principles are neglected and disrupted, the human realm will descend into chaos, leading to discord in the overall cosmic order.

These rules and regulations, whether they pertain to social transactions that mend societal conditions and unify its members, or spiritual practices that elevate humans to their pinnacle of knowledge and righteousness in a virtuous society, must all be received by humanity through divinely appointed prophets and celestial revelation, and no other means.

Based on the aforementioned principles, it becomes clear that the divine obligation accompanies a person throughout their earthly existence, whether they are still in a state of deficiency, having not yet reached full potential, or they have achieved completeness in both knowledge and action. If one is deficient, it is evident. However, if one is complete, it means

they possess virtuous qualities in both knowledge and action. From these qualities emerge societal deeds that benefit and uplift the community. Furthermore, they attain the pinnacle of knowledge and produce spiritual actions that align with this knowledge, as guided by the divine care leading humanity to its ultimate happiness.

It is understood that the possibility of relieving a fully developed individual from obligations inevitably implies their neglect of rules and regulations. In terms of societal interactions, this would result in the corruption of society, which divine care would never sanction.

In terms of acts of worship, neglecting them results in the innate predisposition not producing its effects. Indeed, actions are preliminary means to acquire new predispositions; and if they are acquired, those actions become their natural manifestations, emanating from them without fail.

From this, the flawed assumption becomes evident: some might believe that the purpose of divine obligation is solely to perfect the individual and guide him to the pinnacle of his existence. However, once he is perfected, the continuation of that obligation would seem meaningless.

Indeed, there is a distinction between the perfected individual and others in terms of their actions. The perfected one is safeguarded from contravening the established virtues, unlike the imperfect. And in God, we seek assistance.

End of Chapter 15 & Volume 23

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